

The Grandmaster Mindset

A First Course in Chess Improvement

Alojzije Jankovic



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The Grandmaster Mindset

A First Course in Chess Improvement

by
Alojzije Jankovic

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Key to Symbols

- ! a good move
- ? a weak move
- !! an excellent move
- ?? a blunder
- !? an interesting move
- ?! a dubious move
- only move
- N novelty
- lead in development
- ⊙ zugzwang
- = equality
- ∞ unclear position
- ∞̄ with compensation for the sacrificed material
- ± White stands slightly better
- ∓ Black stands slightly better
- ± White has a serious advantage
- ∓ Black has a serious advantage
- +− White has a decisive advantage
- −+ Black has a decisive advantage
- with an attack
- ↑ with initiative
- ↔ with counterplay
- Δ with the idea of
- ⊃ better is
- ≤ worse is
- + check
- # mate

Preface

Every year chess knowledge increases rapidly, and it is getting harder and harder to find one's way through that giant forest of chess information. As a young player, I used to take lessons from respected coaches – mostly grandmasters – with the idea of learning to orientate myself in that forest by absorbing their great experience, but in a concise way. After my theoretical books about the Richter-Rauzer Sicilian (written together with former European Champion, GM Zdenko Kozul) which went into great depth, this time I wanted to focus more on general skills which I find essential for every young player, and even for club players who are already familiar with some of the ideas covered in this book.

By going through the chapters you will get acquainted with my way of grandmaster-type thinking. I can assure you of one thing: there are better and weaker grandmasters, but you won't find a GM who is playing without ideas or, let's say, without his way of thinking! As you will find out, I am basically trying to detect the problem or goal of the position and then I am starting to scan factors which can lead to the solution. That process you will find in many examples in the book.

To be able to correctly deal with positions in your games, first you need to know who stands better; that is, you need to assess the position correctly. Then when you are searching for moves, you should be able to find the best move in every position; my candidate-moves system will help you with that. In the book there are many examples from tournament praxis, mine and the top players', even of the World Champion himself! In my coaching career those examples were tested in individual lessons, and also in top group lectures like the one in Croatia which consisted of 1700-rated players and also strong GMs rated around 2600. These examples have stood the test of time and, what's even better, there are always some questions and suggestions from the participants and I have used these to update the examples, so now you are getting better quality out of my initial material.

To be able to raise your level of play you will need to work hard on your chess. This book will arm you with some important chess ideas and skills but, more importantly, you will get into the grandmaster's mind. I don't want you to play chess the following way: he attacked me – I need to move away, I attacked him – he needs to retreat. Everyone can play like that. No, I want something completely different, I want you to think this way: how can I make a counterattack? He is controlling that square, I can't put my piece there, wait, or can I? By this critical and creative thinking you will dig deeper into the positions and be able to spot moves or bonds between pieces which you couldn't see before. And, what's even more important, you will see more than your opponent!

Take your time when going through the examples. Maybe sometimes you will have questions about some moves which I didn't mention and that's good, that's how I was improving when I was a young player. I can assure you, even the strongest books include unanswered logical questions, but only the one who is reading them correctly will find them! In the first chapter, about the pin, I give you some time to get warmed up with some basic stuff, but as you will notice quickly, already in Chapter Two (candidate moves) the examples are getting more complicated and you won't have too much time to rest!

I will tell you a secret: that chapter contains my favourite example, the one from the Boensch-Jankovic

game. I will never forget the chance I missed. And I will also give you this advice: don't worry too much about losses, it's more important that you learn lessons from them so you can raise your level of play. Rating follows the quality of your play, not a few results! And last but not least, sometimes when you are working hard on new things, your results get worse for a short period, but after that your level of play rises one or even two categories! So be patient, your time will come for sure. Good luck!

Grandmaster Alojzije Jankovic
Zagreb, April 2020

Chapter 1

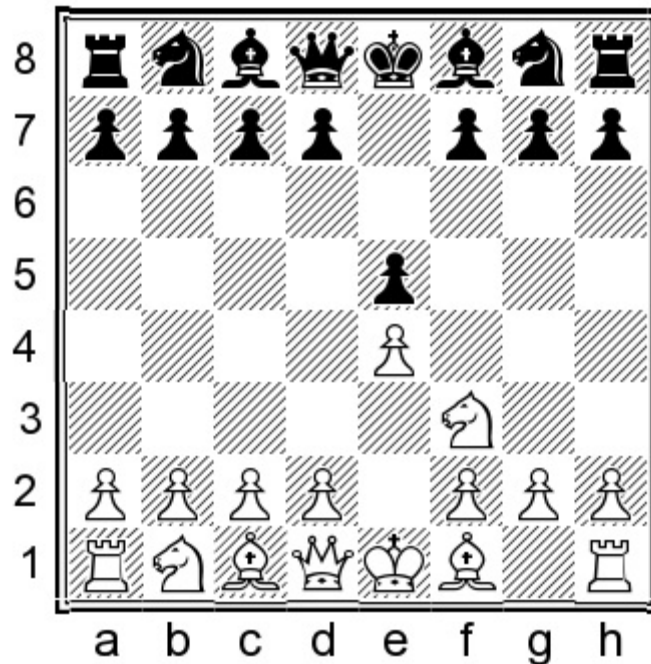
Pin

Example 1

Legal's mate trap

One of the oldest examples of pinning is Legal's mate trap. Why is it important to know it? There are two reasons. The first one is connected with neglecting development of the pieces in the opening, and the other one is related to the theme of the pin. Let's look at how things develop in that example.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3



Position after: 2...♞f3

2...d6

This move surrenders the initiative to White. If it is possible to defend pawns, which have been attacked by the opponent, with piece development that move should have priority.

It is therefore understandable that at this moment the strongest move is 2...♞c6!

3.♞c3 h6?

Totally unnecessary waste of time!

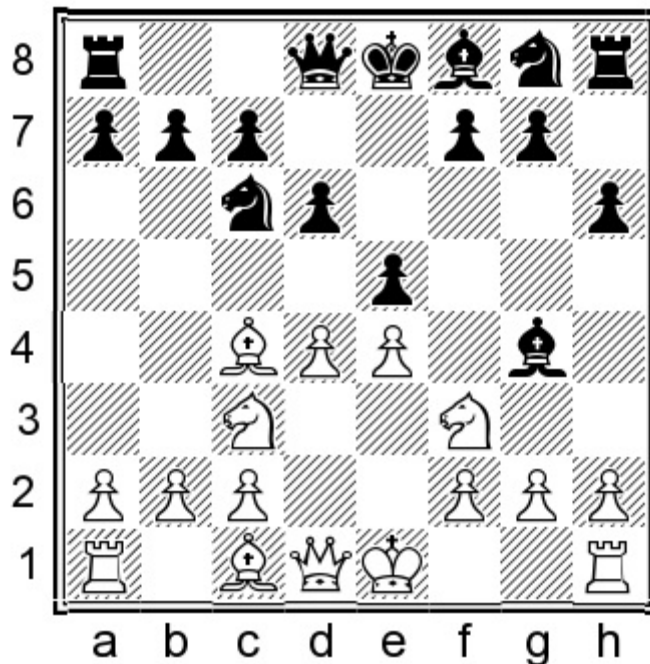
4.d4

White has two developed pieces and he dictates the play.

4...♘c6

On this and the next move, Black's best was to take 4...exd4.

5.♙c4 ♗g4

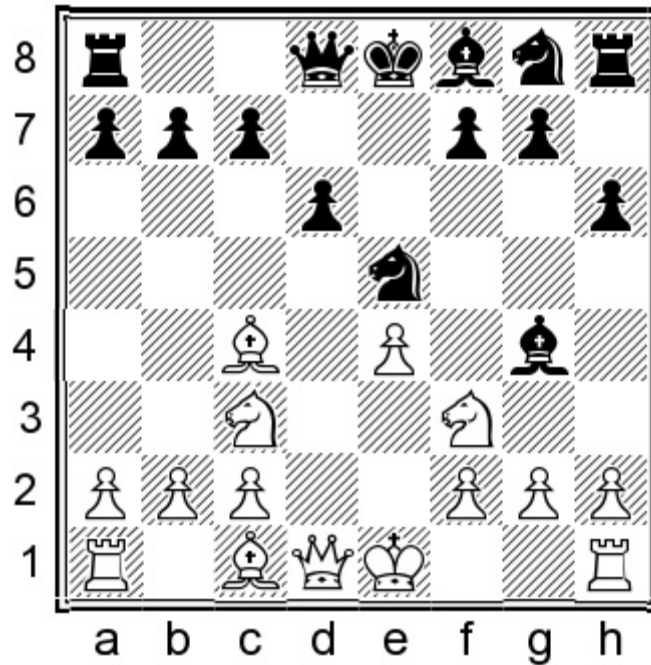


Position after: 5...♗g4

Black has pinned the f3-knight against White's most powerful piece, the queen. So Black would have been feeling quite comfortable, believing that the knight could not move because that would lose the queen.

If the knight were pinned against the king, that would be an absolute pin and the knight absolutely could not move. But a pin against any piece other than the king is a relative pin, and in this case the knight's jump must be considered!

6.dxe5 ♘xe5??



Position after: 6... ♞xe5??

A blunder that leads to loss of the game.

Correct was to take 6... dxe5! when White would have responded with 7. ♕d5, luring Black into a trap: 7... ♞d4? [best for Black is to play 7... ♚f6] which loses due to 8. ♕xf7+! ♚xf7 9. ♞xe5+ and again White's knight jumps out of the pin!

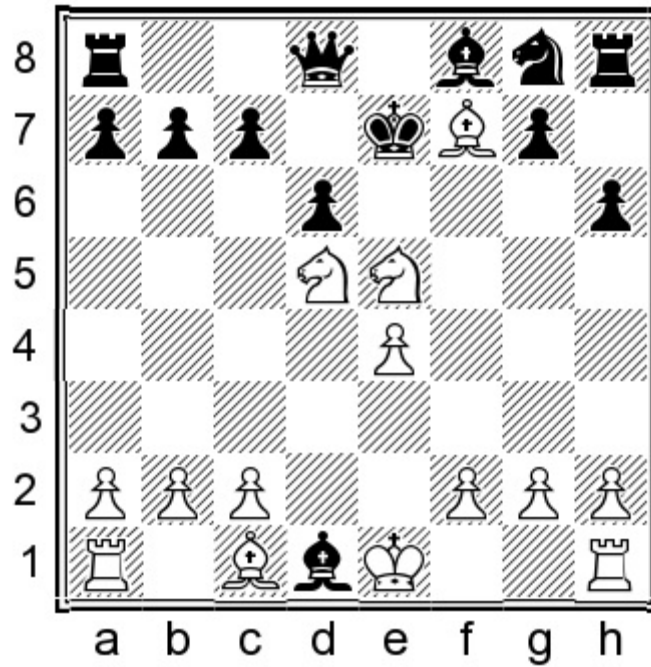
7. ♞xe5!

Suddenly the knight that "couldn't move" jumps up and leaves its queen unprotected. The knight has bigger ambitions – playing for mate!

7... ♕xd1 8. ♕xf7+ ♚e7

And all of a sudden the black king is caught in the mating net!

9. ♞d5#



Position after: 9. ♖d5#

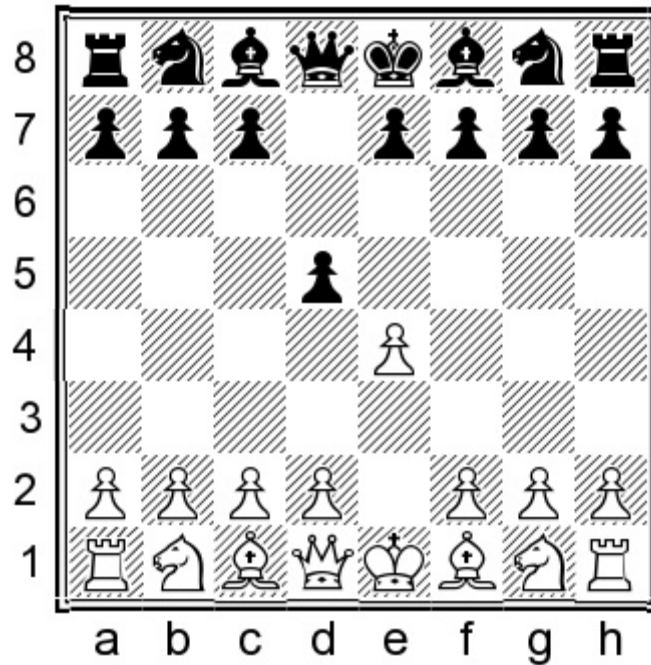
If we stop and take a look at the mate on the board, we can see how powerful White's pieces are in the center!

1-0

Example 2
Unpinning

As in the previous example, the tied piece suddenly abandons its passive position and enters the play with devastating effect.

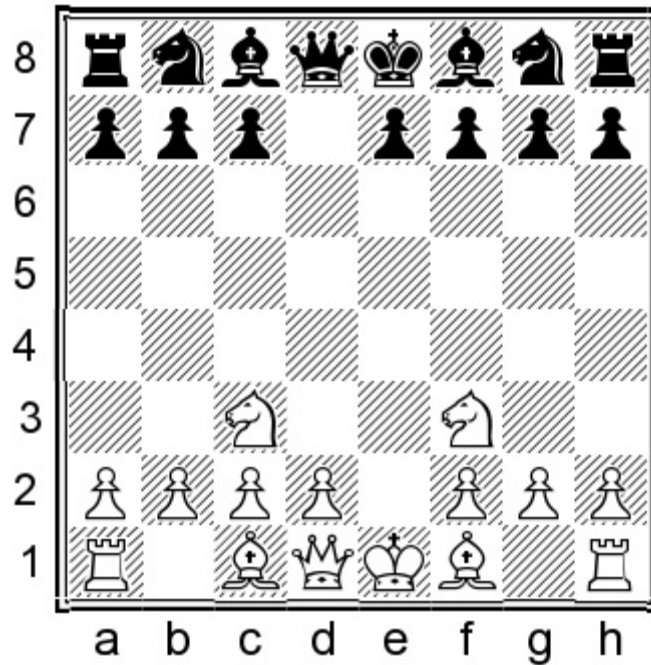
1.e4 d5



Position after: 1...d5

The Scandinavian Defense is very concrete because immediately the pawn position in the center has been defined, which should be good for Black. But the huge minus is that the pawn exchange must be executed by recapturing with the queen. And the queen should not enter the play immediately because of its very high value. Unlike other pieces, the queen must immediately run away from each attack since it is too valuable to lose. Also, due to its exceptional mobility (both diagonally and along files), practically in one move it can join the action. So that's why the queen should not be developed immediately, but later when the position is defined.

2.exd5 ♕xd5 3.♘c3 ♕d8 4.♘f3



Position after: 4. ♘f3

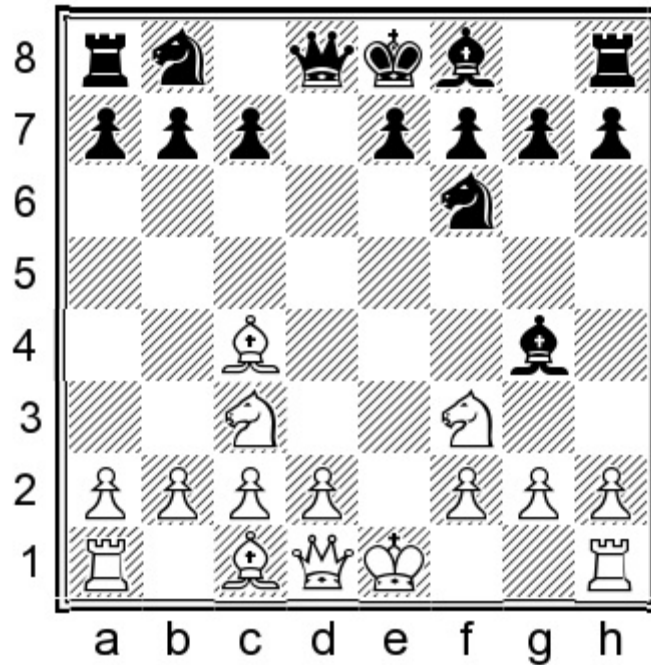
White has two developed pieces and Black none which means that Black must try to catch up with White in development.

4...♗g4

Why does Black play this move?

Because he would want to develop his kingside, which could involve playing ...e6. But that would shut in his light-squared bishop, so it seems logical to develop it first.

5.♗c4 ♘f6??



Position after: 5...♞f6??

Black's second development move in the position and immediately the error that leads to the loss of the game! It was necessary to follow his previous concept no matter the cost and continue with 5...e6, when Black would not be in danger.

6.♞e5!?

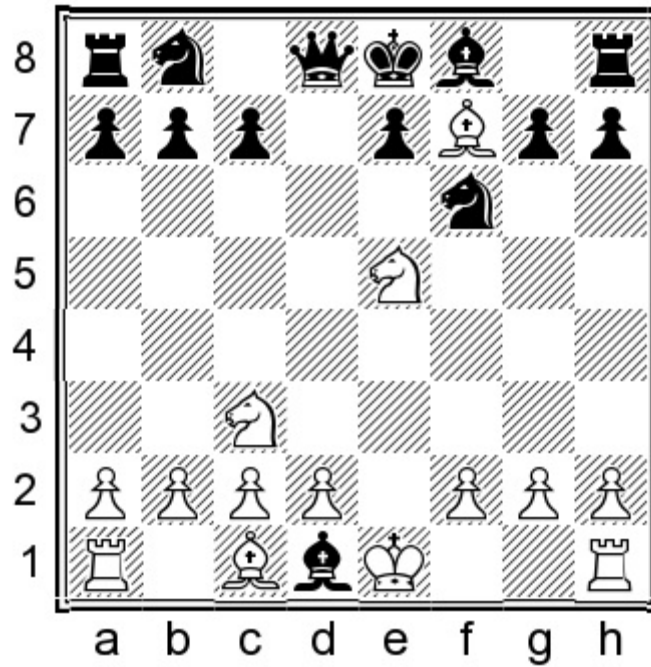
A pinned (passive) piece suddenly becomes a strong attacking piece!

6.♙xf7 is – objectively speaking – a better move, yet 6.♞e5 perfectly demonstrates the power of unpinning!

6...♙h5?

Black tries to defend his critical point, the pawn on f7, which is under threat, but now this bishop becomes an overloaded piece.

A) 6...♙xd1? 7.♙xf7#

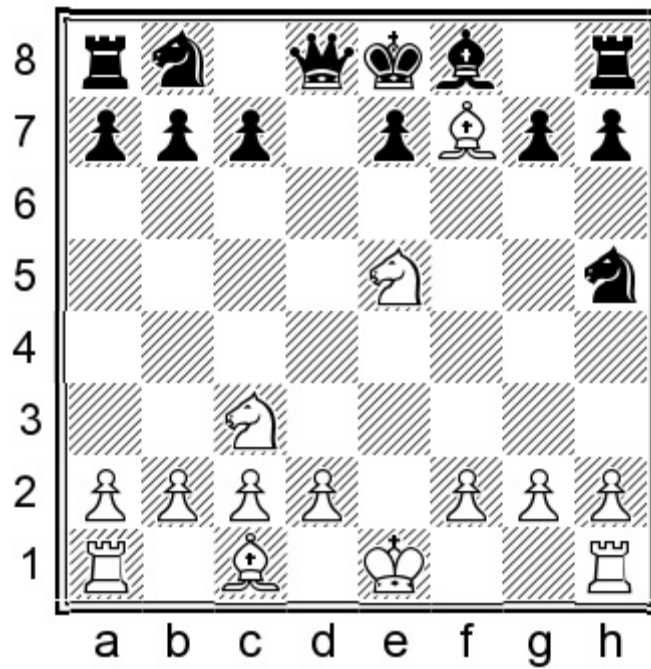


Position after: 7. ♘xf7#

This is one point of the combination. An overloaded piece can be distracted!

B) 6... ♗e6 would have limited the damage.

7. ♖xh5!! ♜xh5 8. ♘xf7#

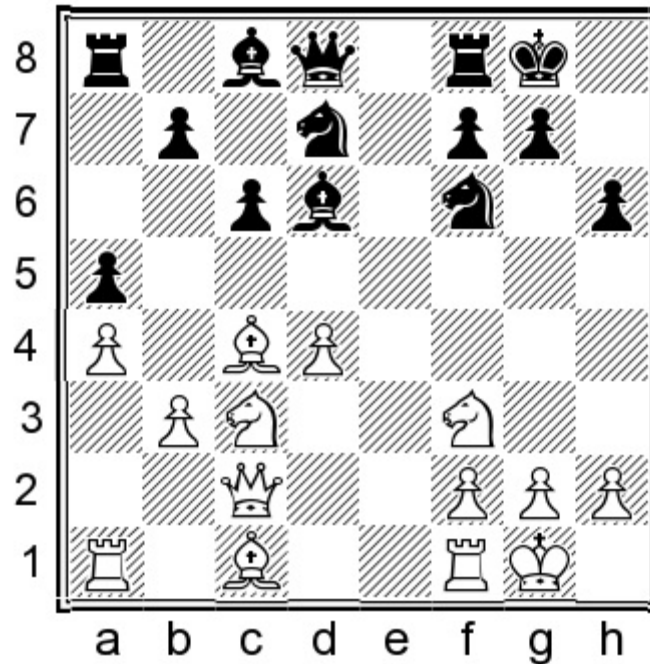


Position after: 8. ♘xf7#

And again mate is on the board!

Example 3

From Giorgadze – Menk
Münster 1995

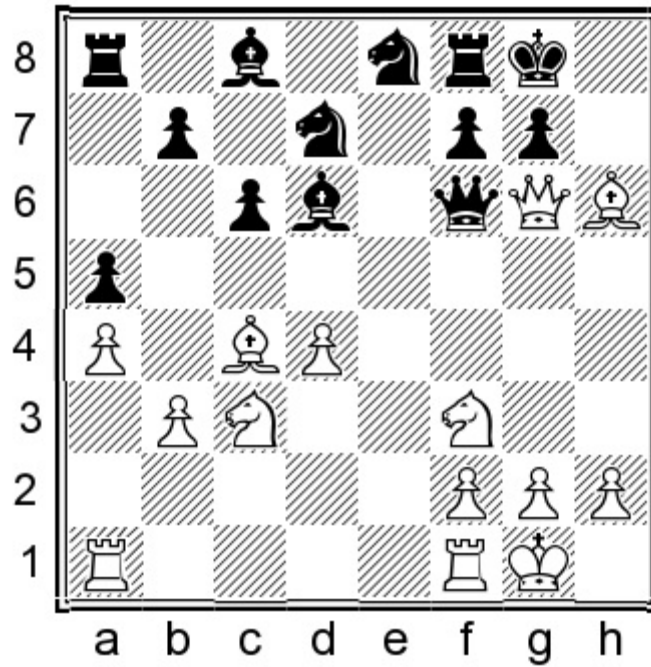


This example shows that even a quiet-looking position can lead to a disaster because of a pin, in this case the white bishop on c4 pinning Black's f7-pawn against his king. Do you see an unprotected piece in Black's camp?

1. ♘xh6!

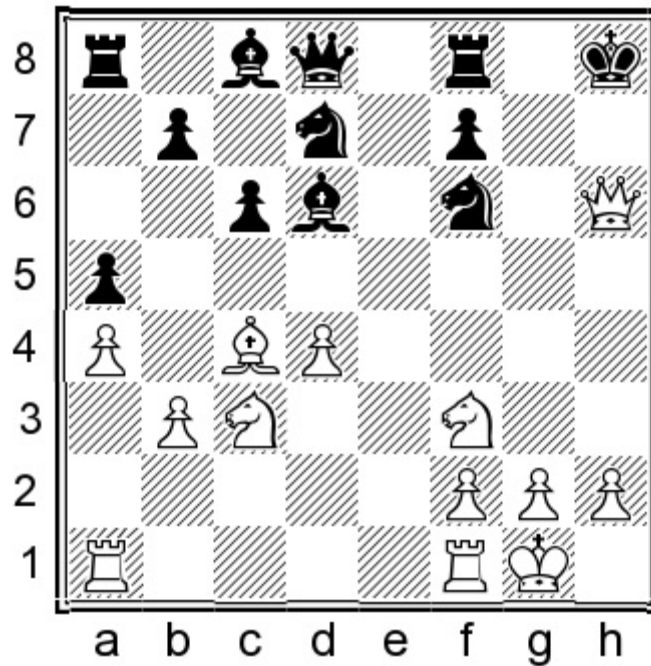
Every capture must be considered!

1. ♔g6 ♞e8 2. ♘xh6 ♔f6 And by exchanging the queens Black would relieve the pressure.



Position after: 2... ♔f6

1. ♙xh6! g6 2. ♚g6+ ♔h8 3. ♚xh6+



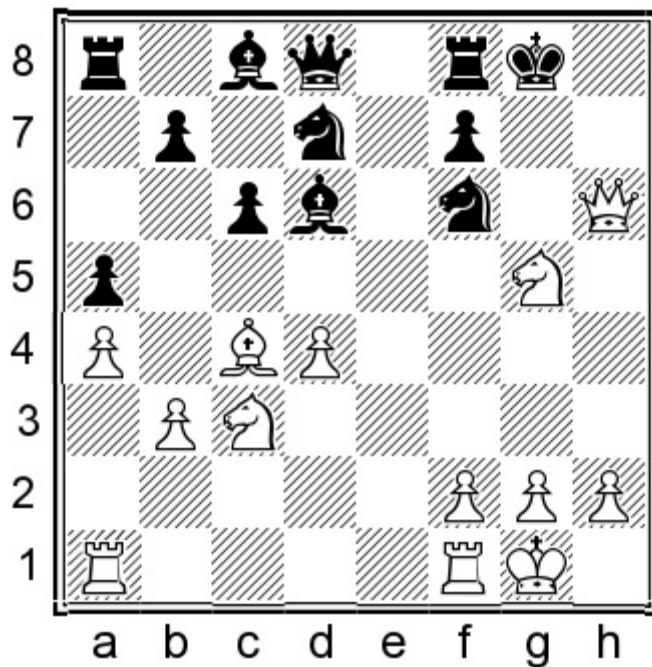
Position after: 3... ♔g8

3... ♔g8

3... ♘h7 4. ♚xd6! This is the point of the combination, which emphasizes the importance of keeping your pieces protected. If the black bishop had been defended, the combination would not work.

Now White can repeat the moves, but to continue the attack it is important that there is a possibility to include new pieces.

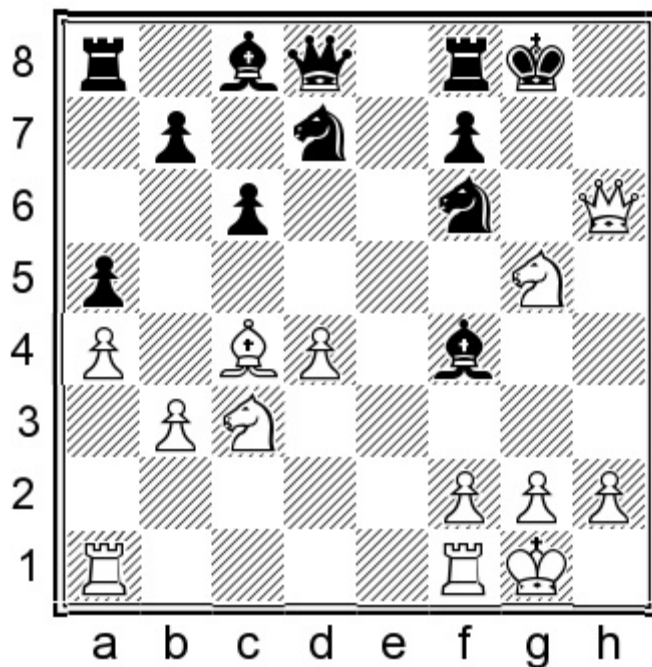
4. ♖g5!



Position after: 4. ♖g5!

With this move, the f7-square becomes indefensible.

4... ♕f4

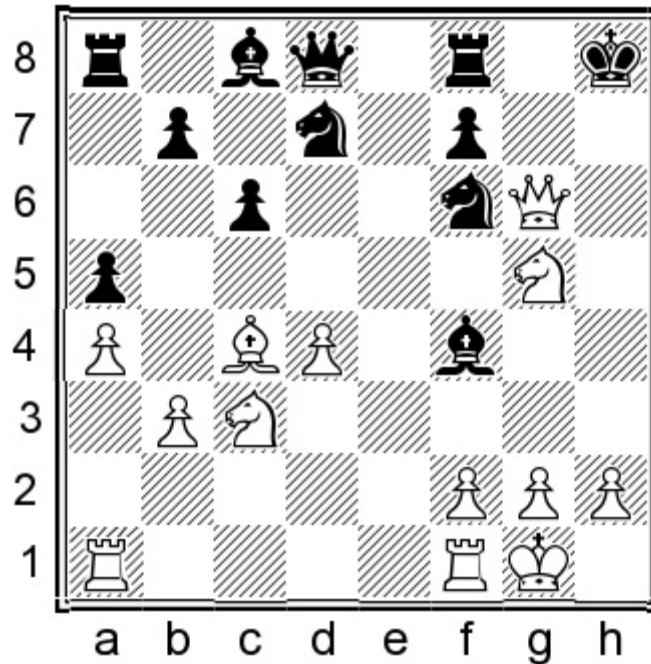


Position after: 4... ♔f4

5. ♖ce4!

A new piece joins the attack! Again White is threatening queen check on g6 and then taking on f7 with the bishop.

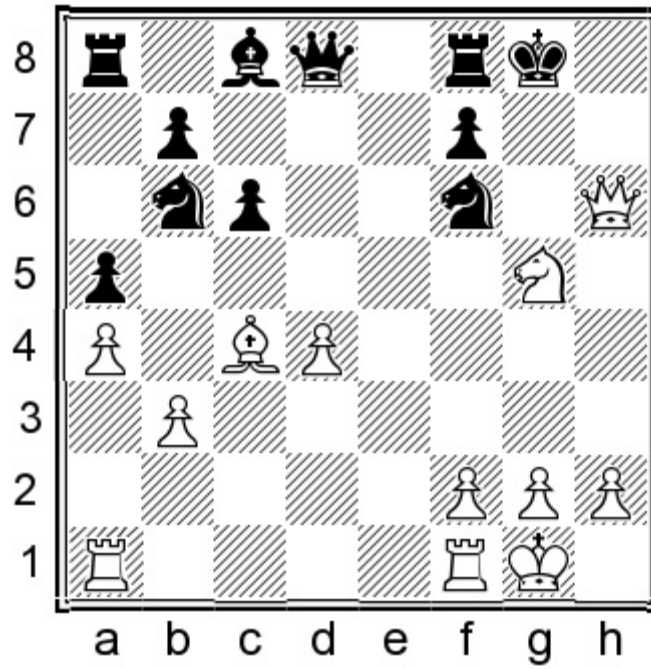
There is no need to rush with 5. ♕g6+ ♔h8



Position after: 5... ♔h8

6. ♖xf7+ [6. ♔xf7? ♔xg5 is Black's defensive idea] because of 6... ♖xf7! 7. ♕xf7 ♕f8 and Black would avoid a quick end.

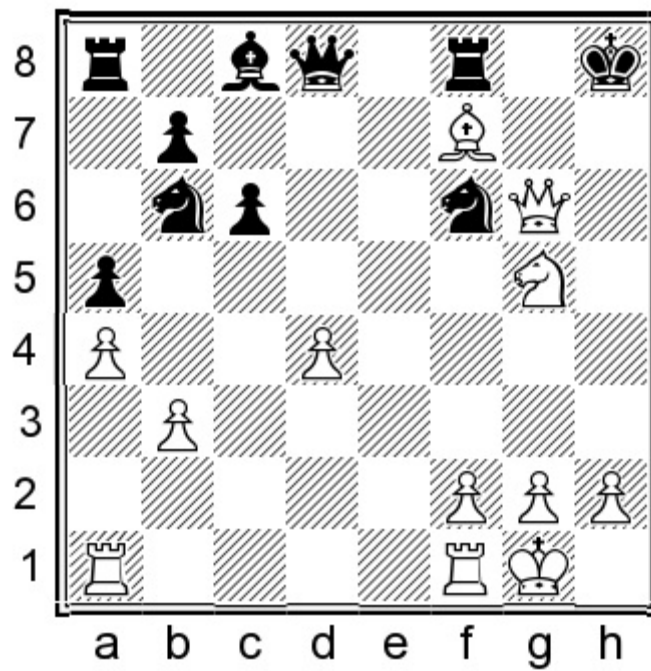
5... ♔xg5 6. ♖xg5 ♖b6



Position after: 6...♘b6

7.♙g6+ ♔h8 8.♙xf7

And next move ♙h6 leads to a quick mate.

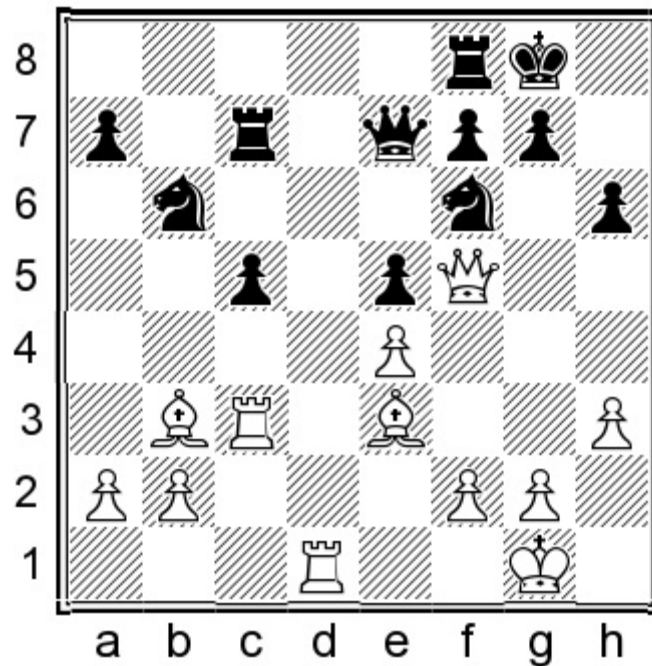


Position after: 8.♙xf7

1-0

Example 4

A similar motif can be found in the following game.

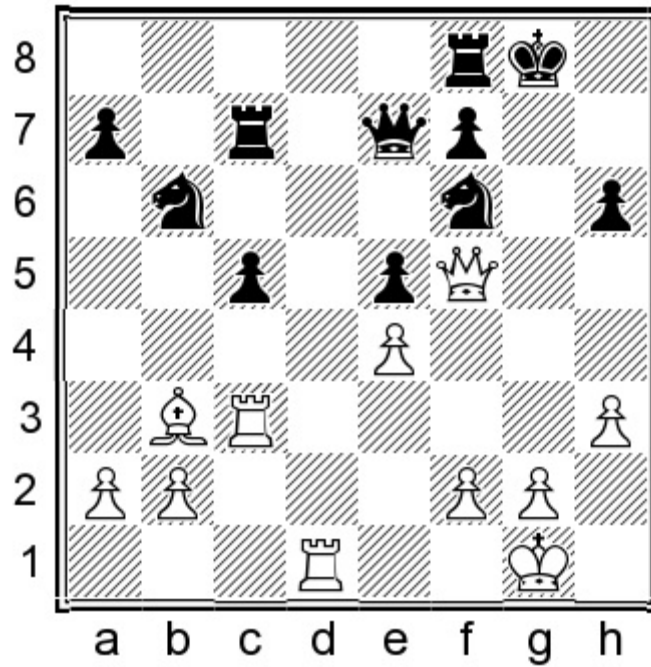


24. ♕xh6!

Again: every capture should be considered!

24...gxh6

Black has nothing better than to accept the sacrifice. The idea from the previous example does not work here since there is no unprotected black piece on d6. Black's knight on f6 is holding the whole position, so how can we unsettle it?

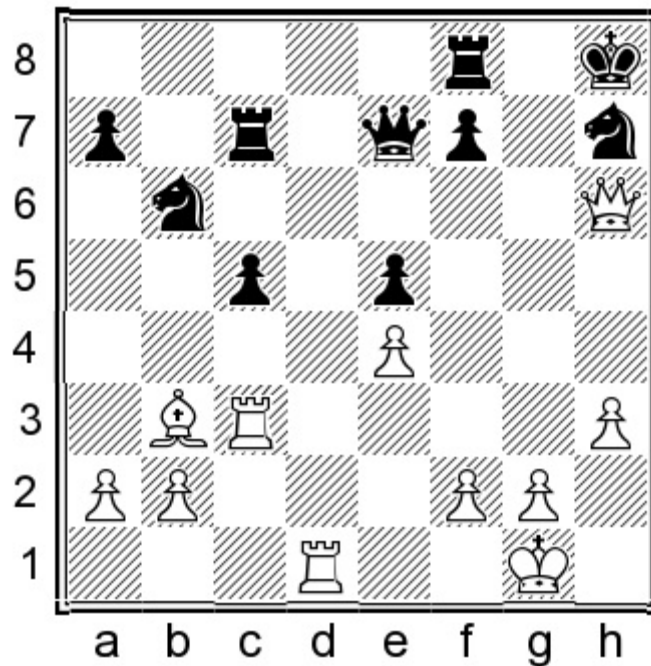


Position after: 24...gxh6

25. ♖d6!!

An apparently unprotected piece suddenly arrives on d6! It's important not to overestimate the material factor – mating the opponent is worth more than sacrificed pieces!

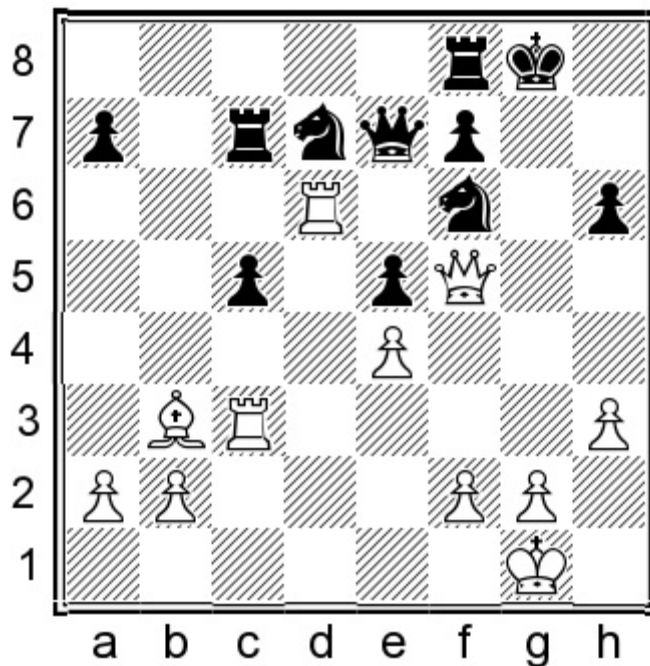
A) 25. ♖g6+ ♔h8 26. ♕xh6+ ♚h7 And White's sacrifice would be pointless.



Position after: 26...♚h7

B) 25. ♖g3+ ♔h8 is also bad for White.

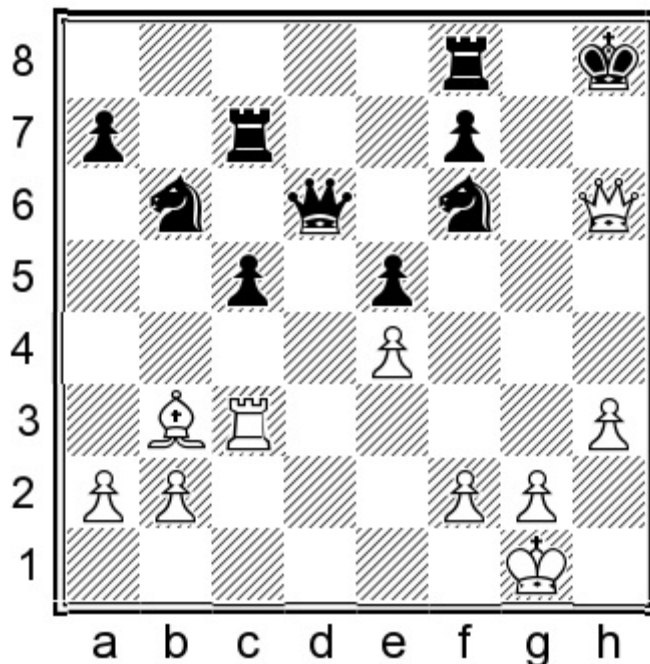
25... ♞bd7



Position after: 25... ♞bd7

The knight tries to overprotect its colleague on f6, but White has a way to break down this defensive rampart. The negative side of Black's move is that it breaks the connection between Black's rook and queen, making the rook on c7 a potentially unprotected piece.

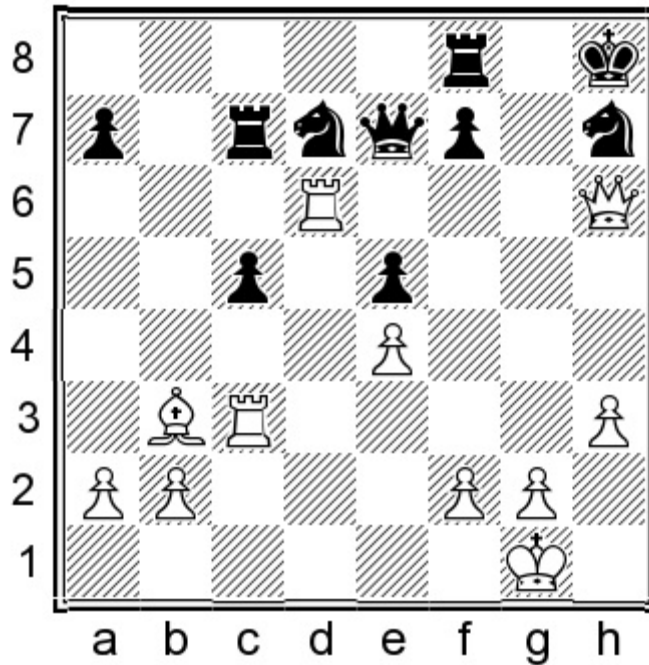
In case of accepting the gift with 25... ♙xd6 there follows 26. ♖g6+ ♔h8 27. ♖xh6+.



Position after: 27. ♖xh6+

And now, as in the previous example, the defense 27... ♘h7 opens up the sixth rank for the white queen to regain the material with interest! [27... ♔g8 28. ♖g3+ is a quick mate] 28. ♕xd6.

26. ♖g6+ ♔h8 27. ♖xh6+ ♘h7



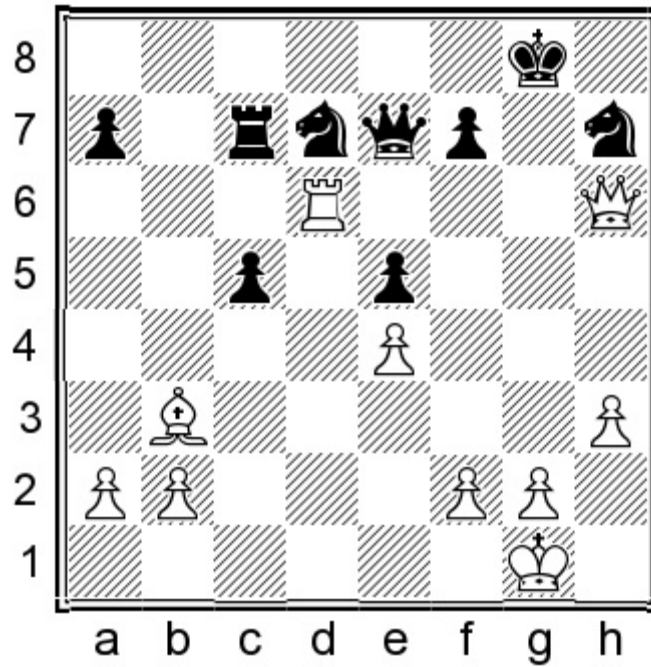
Position after: 27... ♘h7

28. ♖g3!

A fourth piece joins the attack. Now White is attacking with a scary 22 units: 9 (queen) + 10 (rooks) + 3 (bishop)!

28...f6

You can see what a strong tactical element the pin can be, in case of 28... ♖g8 29. ♖xg8+ ♔xg8



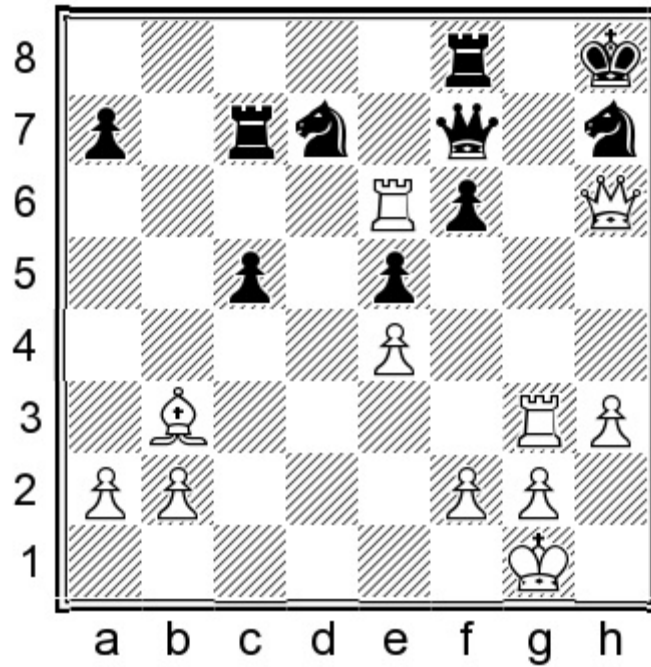
Position after: 29...♔xg8

30.♖g6+. White has brought another piece to the g6 square, exploiting his bishop's pin of the f7-pawn. Black's f-pawn move defends against the mate on g7, but now Black's queen is overloaded, so White upsets it by

29.♖e6!

And Black is doomed since after

29...♕f7



Position after: 29...♙f7

White uses another tactical element – a discovered attack on the unprotected piece!

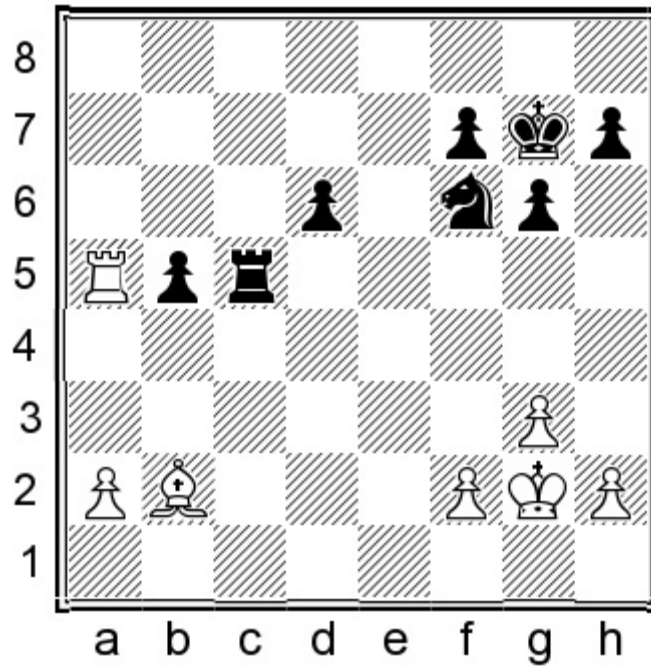
30.♖c6!

1-0

Example 5

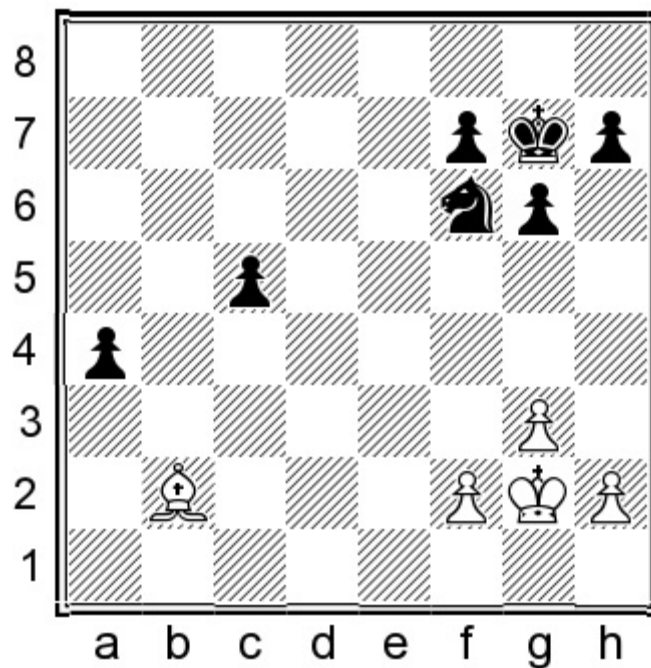
From Giri – Rodshtein

Eilat 2012



Pinning in the endgame can have a decisive effect since there are far fewer opportunities for a defending side to break the pin. Top grandmasters have a great feeling for pinning and in this example Giri with a series of strong moves creates an “eternal pin”!

34.a4! bxa4 35.♖xc5 dxc5



Position after: 35...dxc5

Now comes the point.

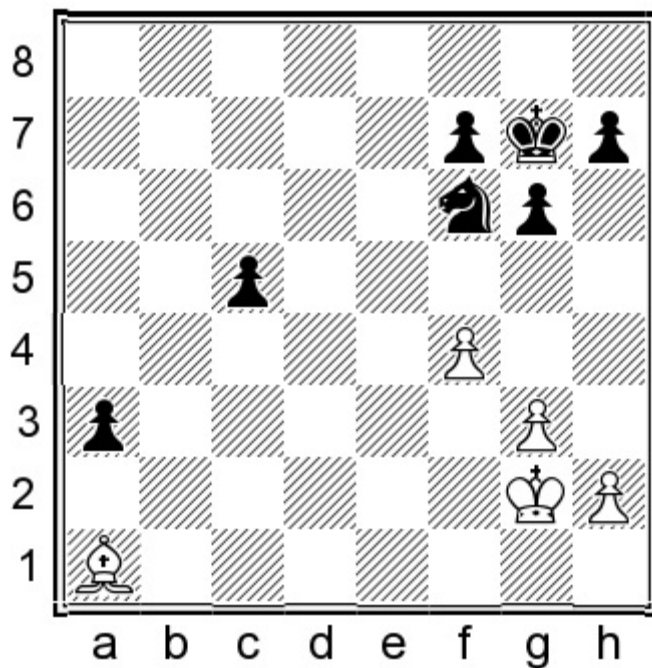
36.f4!

With the aim of preventing Black from unpinning with ...g5 and ...♔g6.

36...a3

Of course, White will ignore this pawn since the pin along the diagonal is too precious for him.

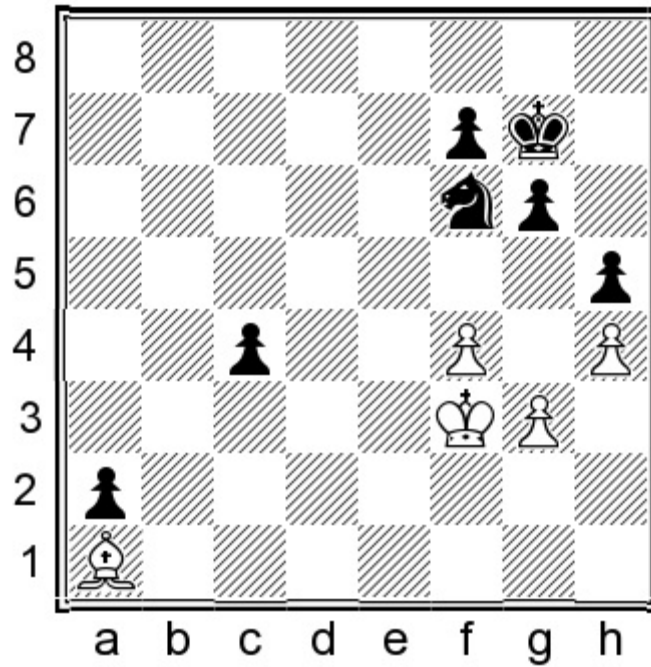
37.♕a1



Position after: 37.♕a1

And Black decided to call it a day without waiting for his knight to fall. For example:

37...h6 38.h4 h5 39.♔f3 c4 40.♕c3 a2 41.♕a1



Position after: 41. ♔a1

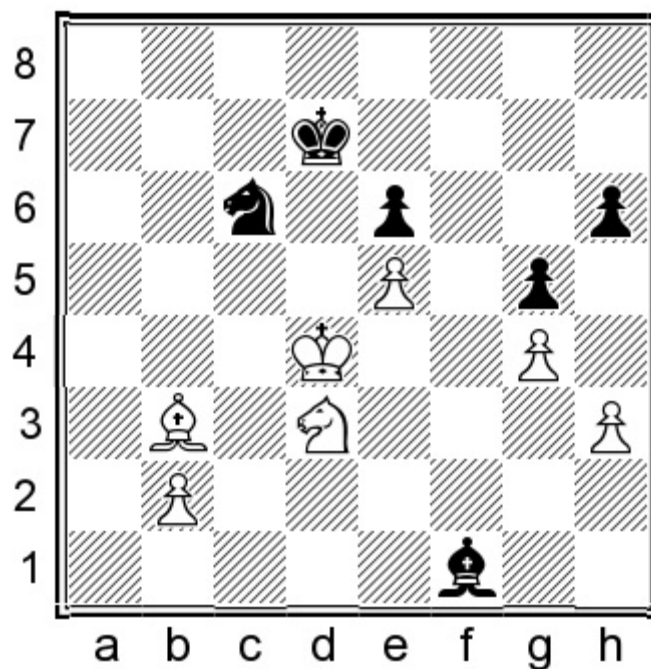
Black is in zugzwang and the knight falls.

1-0

Example 6

From Carlsen – Caruana

London 2017



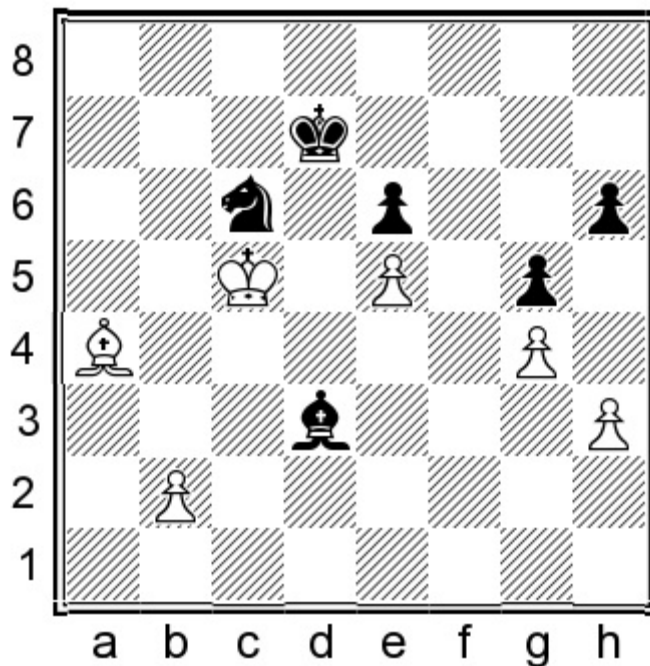
In this example you can see how World Champion Magnus Carlsen uses pinning to solve a problem.

White's pawns on the kingside are under attack and at the same time the white king is in check, so Carlsen needs to decide where to go with his king. Magnus found the possibility of creating the eternal pin!

52. ♔c5!

He abandons the defense of his knight to launch the counterattack.

52... ♖xd3 53. ♖a4



Position after: 53. ♖a4

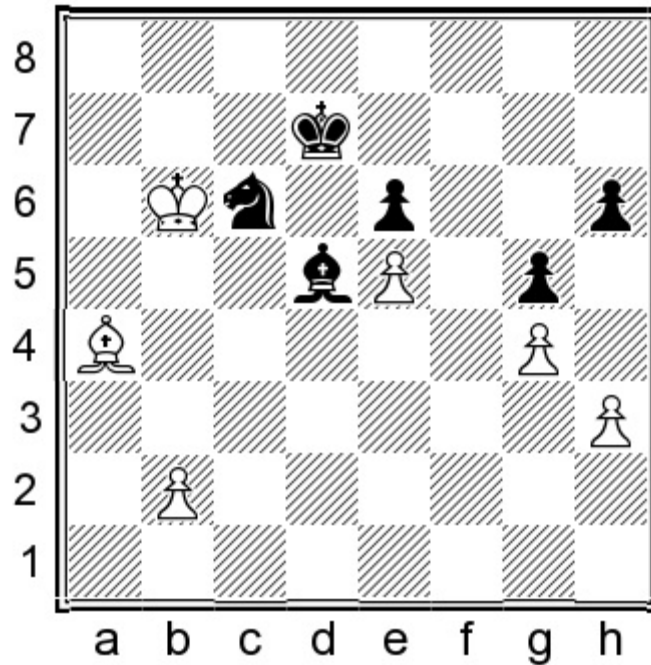
The pin is on the board, and now after

53... ♖e4

it is important to make it eternal so that Black cannot unpin himself with ... ♔c7.

54. ♖b6! ♖d5

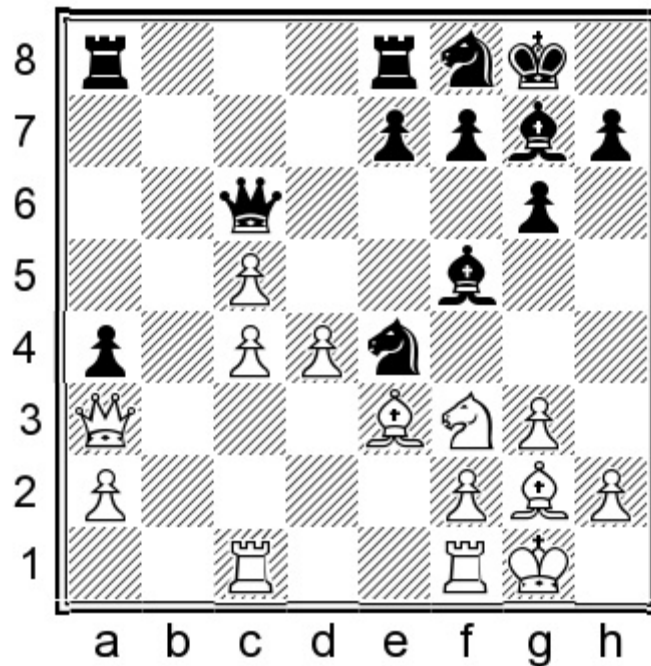
And here Caruana offered a draw, aware of the fact that White can just play ♖b5-a4-b5 and Black cannot unpin himself. ½-½



Position after: 54...♔d5

Example 7

From Ponomariov – Malakhov
Danzhou 2017



How would you assess this position? The first thing you look at is material, so what is the situation there? After quick counting you come to the conclusion that White has two pawns for the opponent's piece and you realize that this is not enough. So you have to look at other factors, such as the position of the pieces. You quickly notice that the white pieces are more active and that White has a pawn mass in the center.

Yet what you need to feel is the relation between White's g2-bishop and Black's queen on c6. The black queen feels uneasy! Now it's time for specific action, so how to exploit this fact? Of course, you have to look for candidate moves:

A) Every check should be considered, but in this position there are no checks.

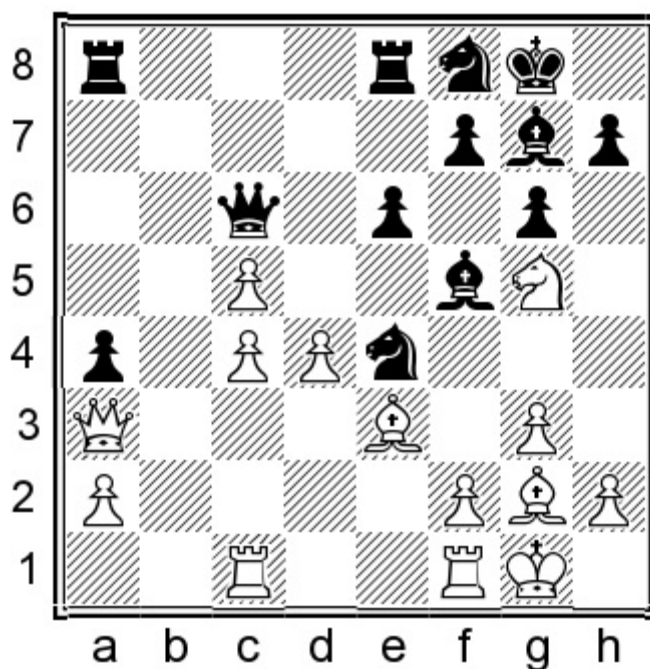
B) Every capture should also be considered. After careful consideration you reject all the possible captures.

C) A threatening move – one is 25.d5, but after the queen retreats you realize that you have not used this x-ray potential against the black queen. A move that can create a threat (remember – it is often said that the threat is stronger than the execution!) is:

25. ♖g5!

Ponomariov spots the power of the pin! Also strong was 25. ♖d2!

25...e6



Position after: 25...e6

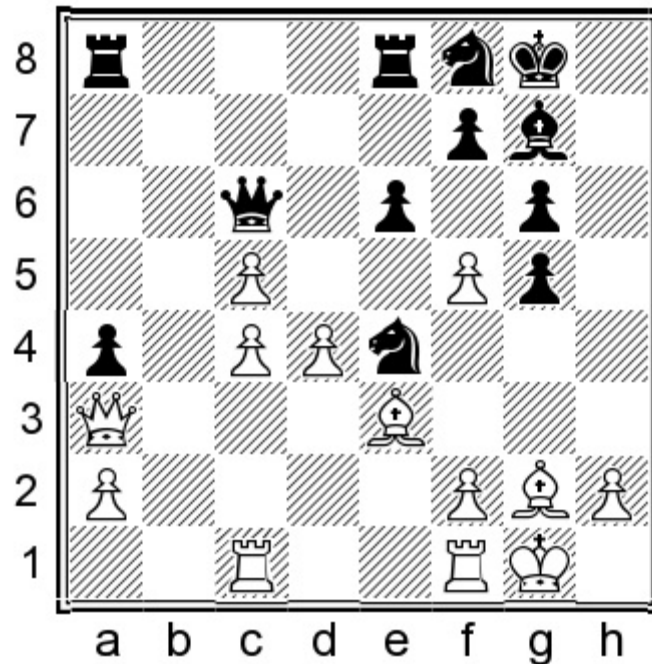
Since White is threatening the move d5, which interrupts the black queen's support of the e4-knight, Black tries to neutralize that threat. But now two of Black's pieces are overloaded: the black queen (but we cannot upset it) and the black bishop on f5 that defends the e4-knight. When a piece is overloaded, the recipe is to distract it!

26.g4! h6

Since the black bishop must remain at f5 to support the knight, the only option for Black is to quickly

attack White's knight on g5.

27.gxf5 hxg5



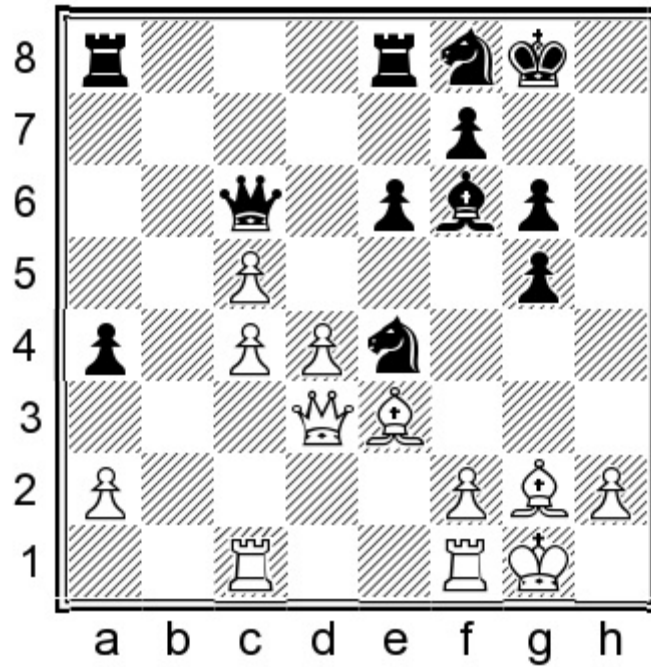
Position after: 27...hxg5

It seems that the worst is over for Black, but there is an exceptionally important move that emphasizes pinning in all its glory.

28.f6!!

An important intermezzo that overwhelms Black by preventing the support of the e4-knight.

28...♙xf6 29.♚d3



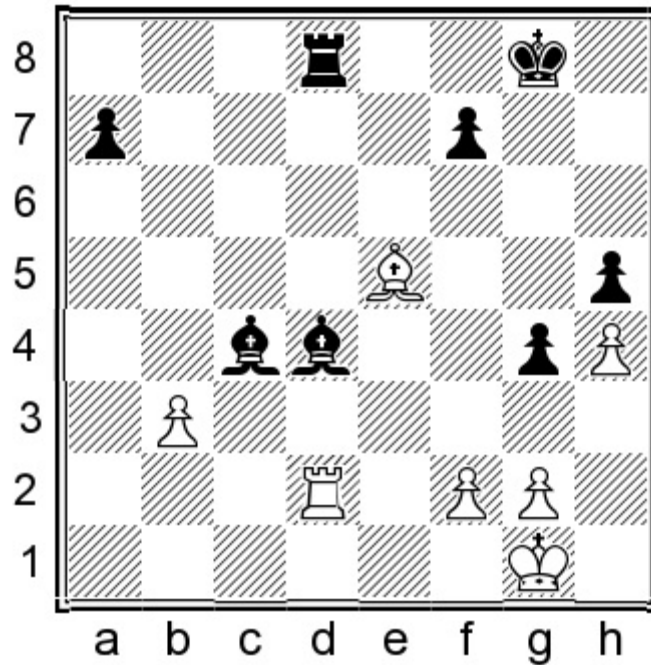
Position after: 29. ♔d3

And now, since Black has been deprived of the possibility of playing ...f7-f5, the knight on e4 is lost, and therefore the whole game since White's bishop pair and strong central pawns guarantee him a decisive advantage.

1-0

Example 8

From Höglauer – Dobrov
Budapest 2017



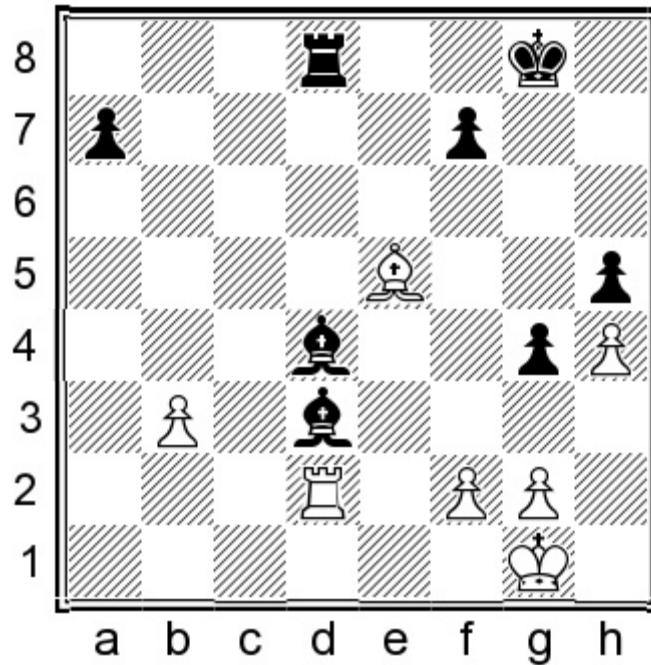
How to analyze this moment? It can be done in the way I will explain now. First, check two obvious moves. After some brief calculation you might decide for, let's say, the move $1... \text{♞b6}$. After that move the game could go on for many moves and you unnecessarily enter an adventure which can end up badly for you.

However, since you have decided to learn correctly and bought this book, you have learned from Example 7 the correct process for calculation. First we consider every check, so $1... \text{♞f2}$ should be taken into account. Second, we examine every capture, so $1... \text{♞xe5}$ and $1... \text{♞xb3}$ are the candidate moves. Next we look for moves that generate a threat, and we see $1... \text{♞b6}$. You don't see other moves that pose a threat? Never mind, then start to think about placement of the pieces.

There are some pins on the board. If there were no black bishop on d4 then Black would take the rook on d2. And if the bishop on c4 were not attacked, let's say if it were on a6, Black would play $1... \text{♞b6}$ and remain a piece up.

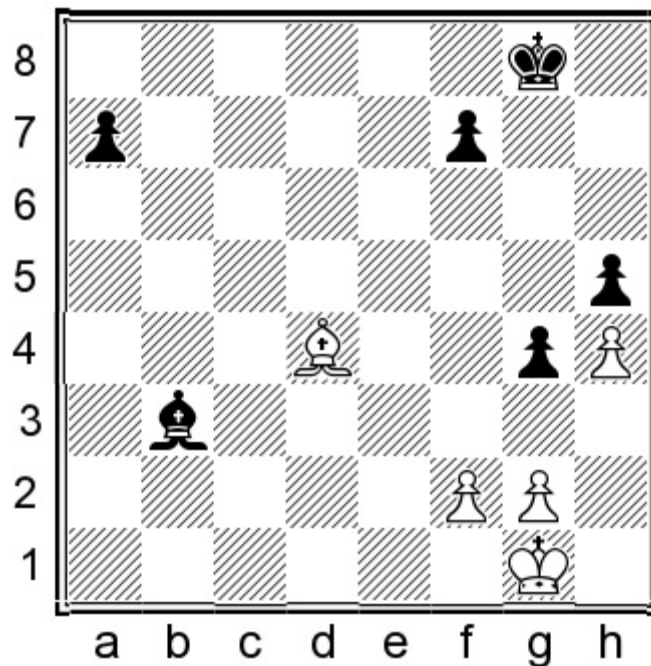
What about unprotected pieces? Practically all pieces are unprotected at the moment, both white and black, so maybe there are some currently hidden motifs?

$1... \text{♞d3}!!$



Position after: 1...♙d3!!

A) White is a piece down, but expects to regain it through the pin along the d-file. In that case, opposite-colored bishops would be on the board, which would increase White's drawing chances. Black can win a pawn by playing 1...♙xb3 2.♖xd4 ♗xd4 3.♙xd4



Position after: 3...♙xd4

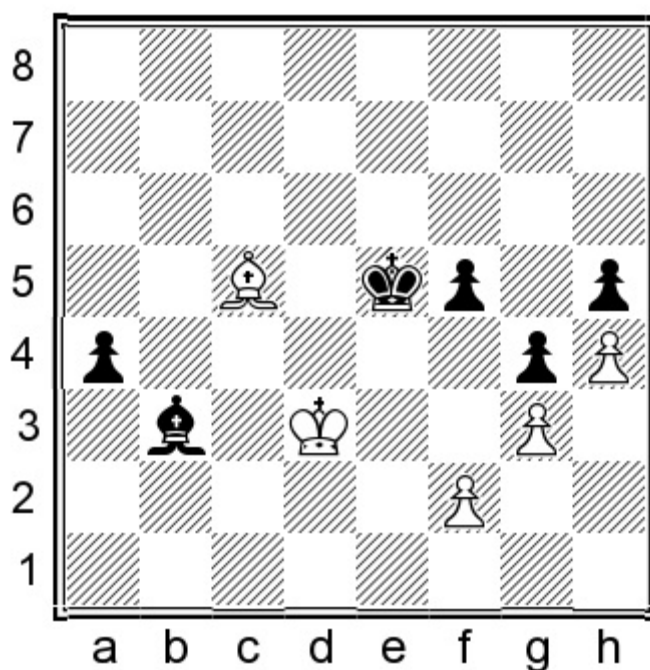
but this position is a draw, because the presence of opposite-colored bishops enables White to create a blockade on the dark squares. Why do opposite-colored bishops often save the weaker side? The reason is that when the weaker side sets up a blockade, occupying squares the same color as those his

bishop moves on, the stronger side has no way to break that blockade.

This is especially evident in the diagram position. If all the kingside pawns and White's bishop were removed, White could draw a bishop and pawn down if he could get his king across to the queenside, because Black's light-squared bishop cannot control the queening square.

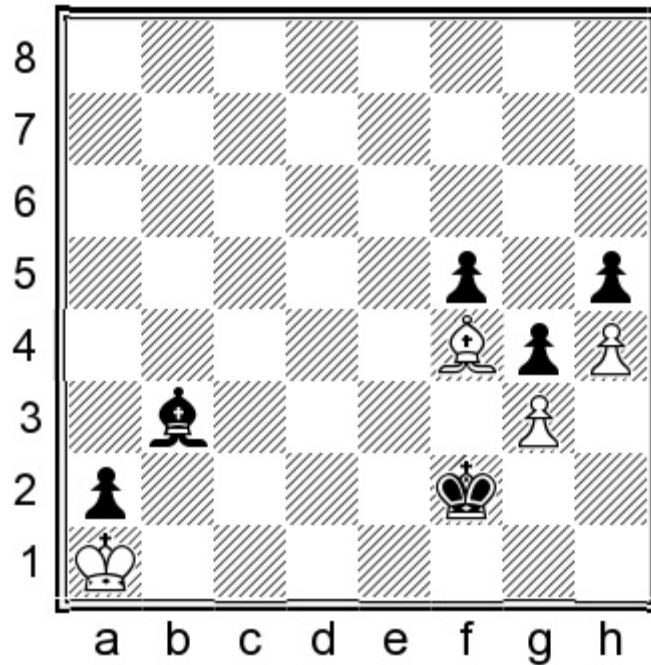
In this type of position where the stronger side is a pawn up (of course if he has two connected pawns he could easily break the opponent's blockade) he cannot win on the queenside, but needs to have a chance to attack on the other side.

The plan would be to occupy White on the queenside and then run his king to the other side when he gets the chance. But in this position the kingside is already defined: Black has occupied the light squares, and White the opposite. This "smells" like a blockade and you will see how that arises. 3...a5 4.♔f1 a4 5.♙c5 ♖g7 6.♔e2 ♜f6 7.♔d3 ♔e5 8.g3 f5



Position after: 8...f5

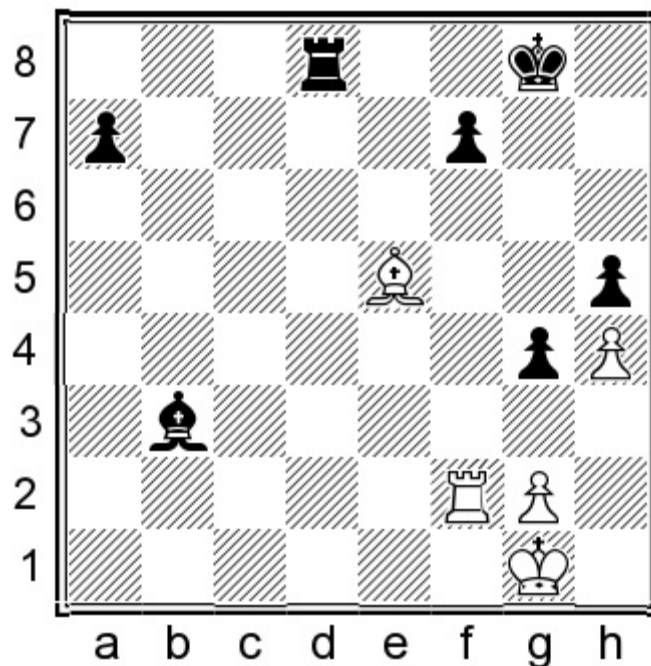
Of course, here it is possible to resist in the center and prevent the penetration of the black king, but in order to underline the power of the blockade with the opposite-colored bishops, I am ready to sacrifice another pawn since after that it is obvious that Black can never kick White out. 9.♙e3 a3 10.♔c3 a2 11.♔b2 ♔e4 12.♙f4 ♜f3 13.♔a1 ♜xf2



Position after: 13... ♔xf2

The blockade is fulfilled and now both sides can only play on their own color! 14. ♕e5 ♖f3 15. ♕f4 ♖e2 16. ♕d6 ♖d2 17. ♕e5 ♖c2 18. ♕f4 It's a draw.

B) Appealing is 1... ♕xf2+ since after 2. ♖xf2 ♕xb3

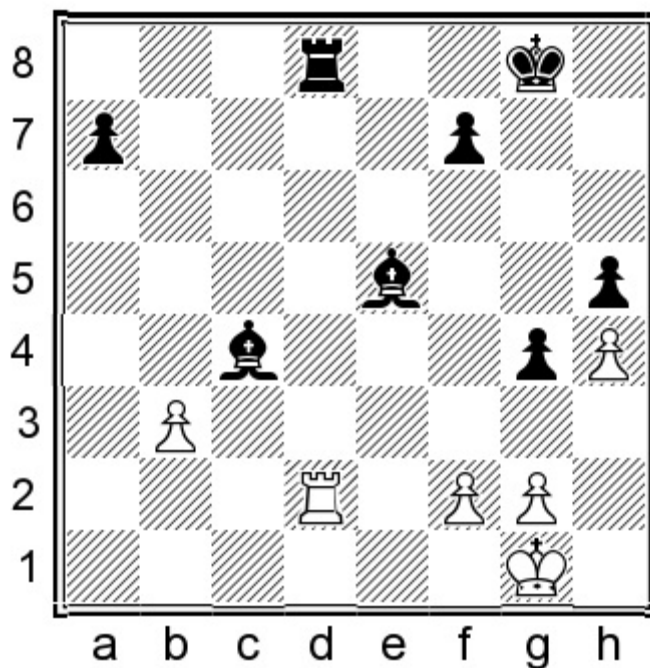


Position after: 2... ♕xb3

Black remains two pawns up, but White wins back the h5-pawn after the 3. ♖f5! and he will also threaten the black king. Nevertheless, with rooks on the board Black increases his chances of

preventing White's blockade.

C) Of course, 1...♔xe5?? would be a crude mistake

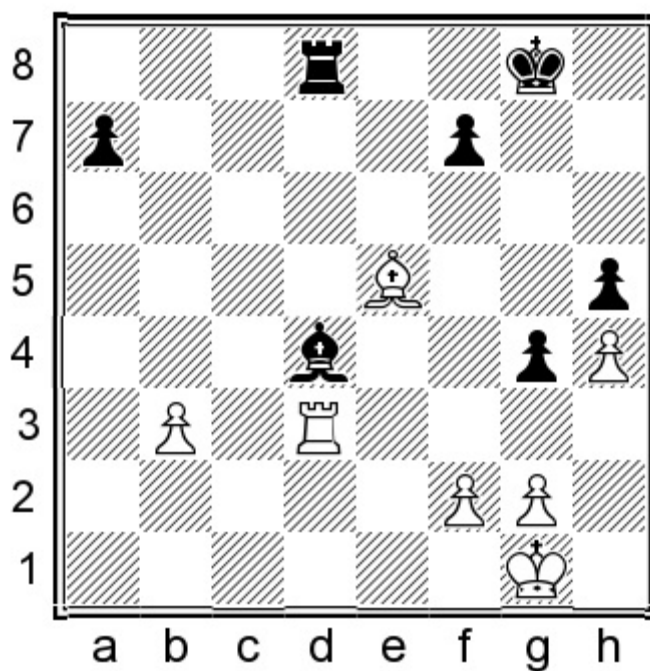


Position after: 1...♔xe5??

because Black's rook falls with check 2.♖xd8+ and then the bishop on c4 goes as well.

D) Material is equal after 1...♔b6 2.♖xd8+ ♔xd8 3.bxc4 ♔xh4.

1...♔d3!! 2.♖xd3



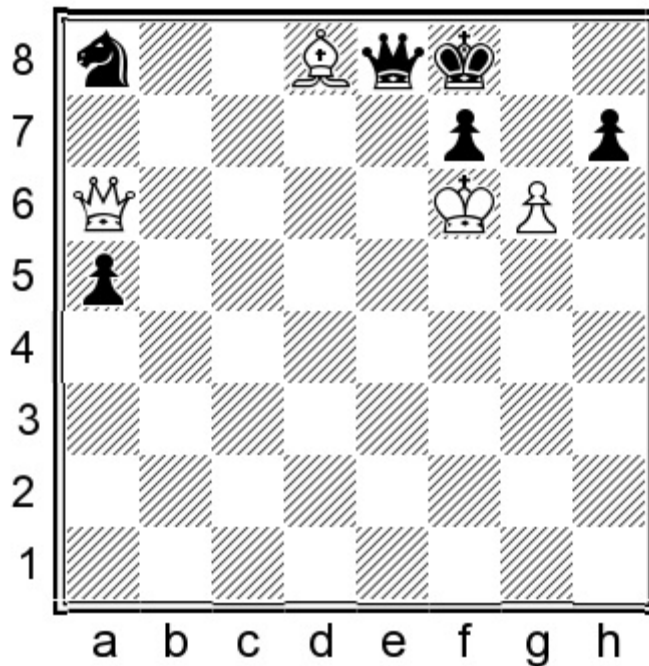
Position after: 2. ♖xd3

2. ♙xd4 ♜xd4+

2... ♙xf2+ 3. ♚xf2 ♜xd3+ 0-1

Example 9

Study by M. Matouš, 1975



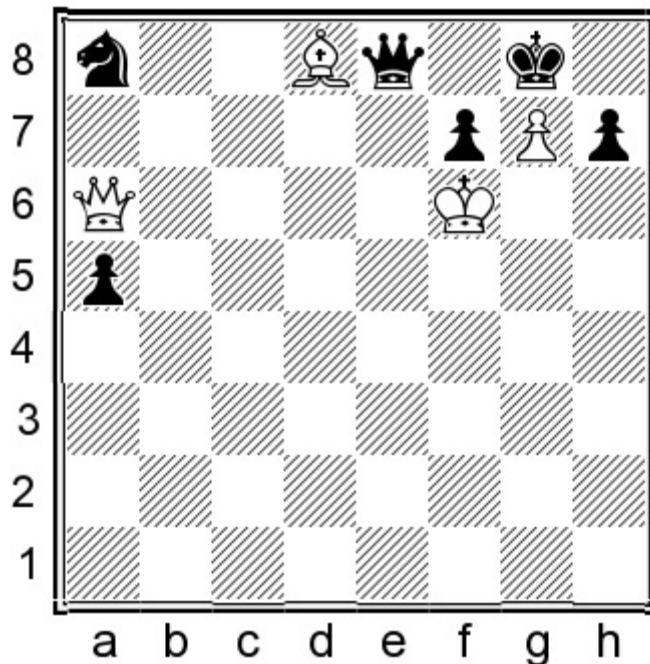
The motif of eternal pinning also can be found in the most complicated tasks, such as this one. Let's try to solve it together. What are the candidate moves? Possible checks are 1. ♙e7+, 1. g7+, 1. ♚d6+, and possible captures are 1. gxh7, 1. gxf7, 1. ♚xa8, 1. ♚xa5. A threatening move is 1. ♚c8.

1. ♚c8!

Why is this the best move? The move poses the ♙e7+ threat which would win the queen and, what is very important, from c8 the white queen controls the e6-square! But first, let's analyze other moves which are more direct.

A) 1. ♙e7+ we reject immediately due to the obvious 1... ♚xe7+.

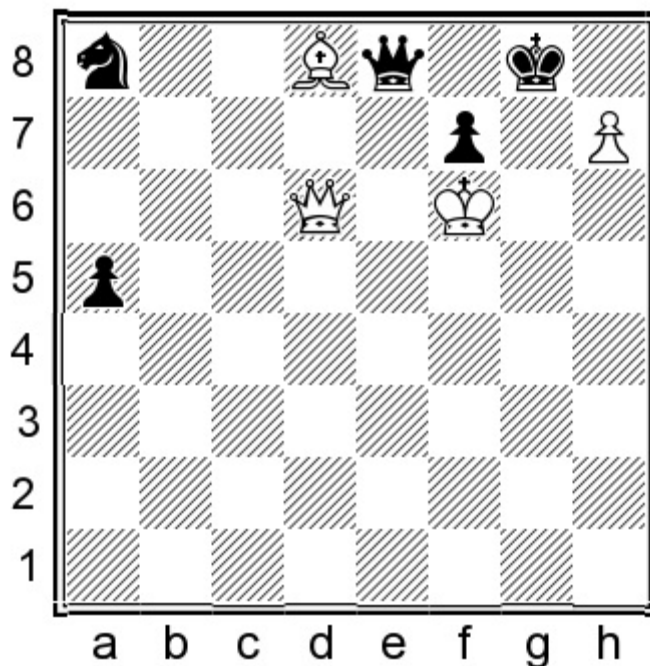
B) 1. g7+ looks more appealing, but after 1... ♚g8



Position after: 1...♔g8

2.♙xa8 [2.♗xa5 ♚e6+ 3.♙xe6 ♜xe6 and the game will end in a draw since Black will sooner or later win the g7 pawn by sacrificing his other pawns.] 2...♚e6+ 3.♔g5 ♜xg7 a piece up is not enough for White to win when he has no pawns.

C) A tempting line is 1.♙d6+ ♔g8 2.gxh7+

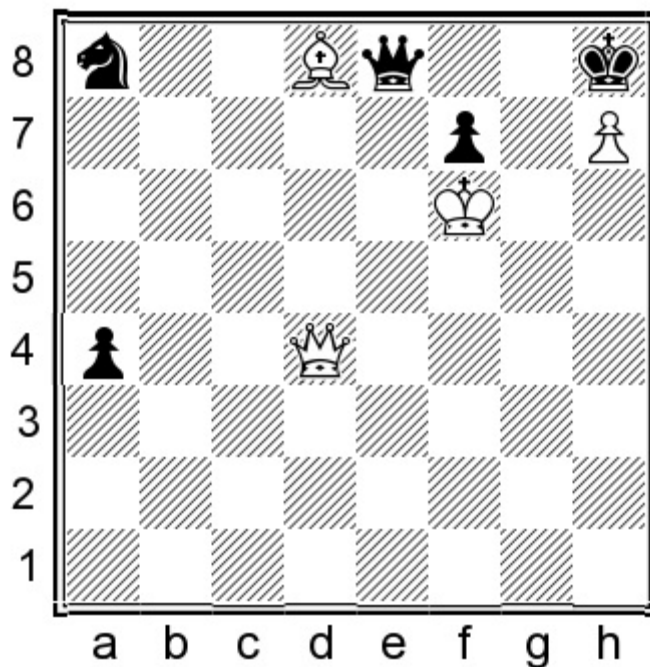


Position after: 2.gxh7+

but Black in this case defends with the important 2...♚h8! [Black is quickly getting mated after

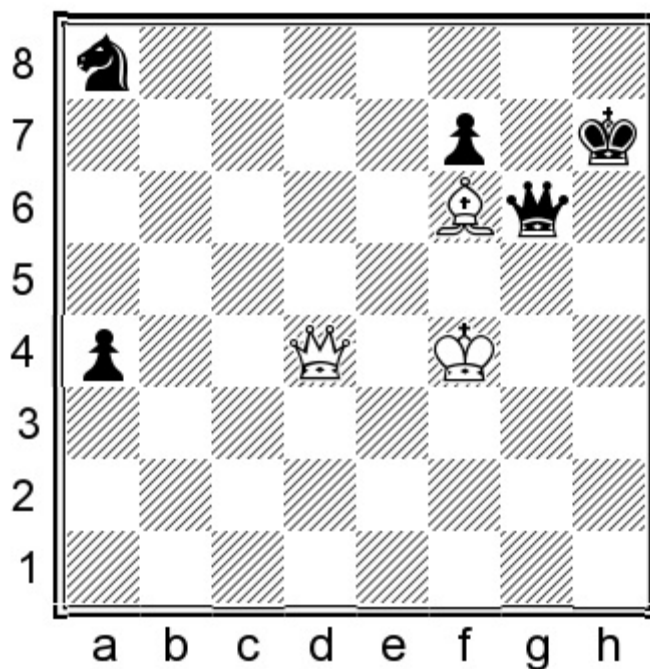
2...♔xh7?? 3.♚h2+ ♔g8 4.♚g3+ ♔f8 5.♚g7#] 3.♚d4!?

An attempt to prepare a discovered check, but actually White doesn't have a real threat and therefore Black actually has time, for example, for the move 3...a4



Position after: 3...a4

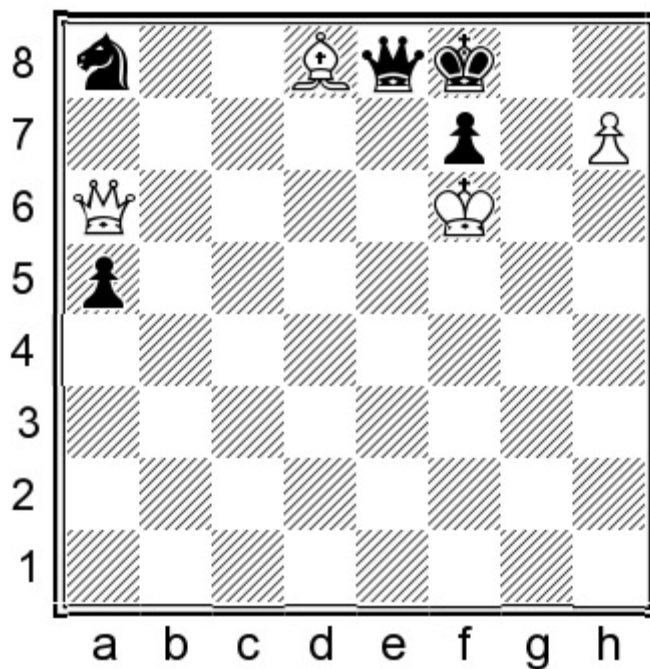
[but not 3...♚e6+? 4.♔g5+ ♔xh7 5.♙f6! and Black cannot prevent the mate] 4.♔g5+ ♔xh7 5.♙f6
 [5.♚h4+ ♔g8!] 5...♚g8+ 6.♔f4 ♚g6



Position after: 6...♚g6

and White has no way to build a mating net. 7. ♖d8 ♜g8 8. ♖d3+ ♜g6 9. ♖h3+ ♜h6+ The queens are traded and it's a draw.

D) Since the checks did not yield the desired effect, we can move on to the candidate moves which are captures. The first move that looks very tempting is 1.gxh7.

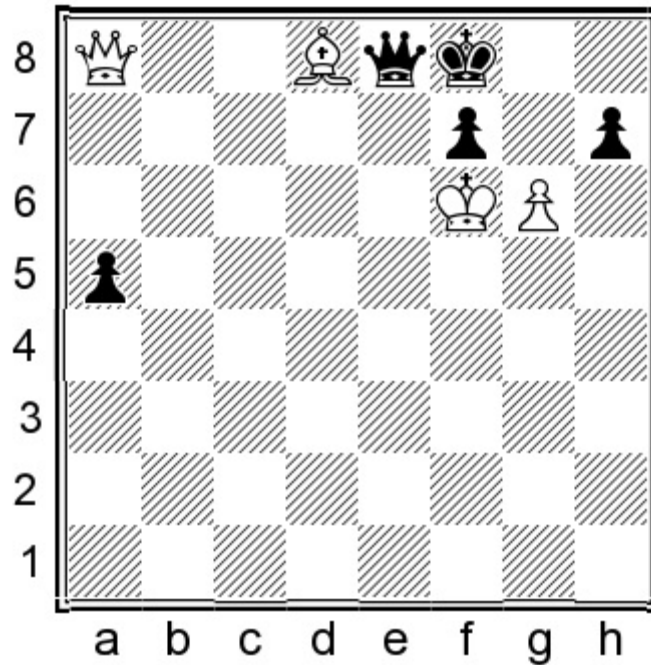


Position after: 1.gxh7

That would be very unpleasant if 1... ♖xd8+ were not check. After 2. ♔f5 there follows 2... ♔g7 and White can resign.

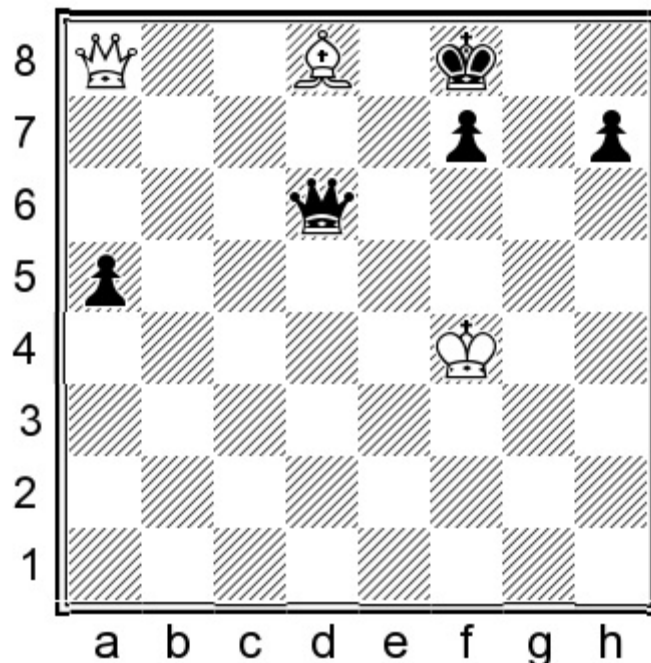
E) The same goes for 1.gxf7 ♖xd8+.

F) Since pawn captures are not good for White, we can now proceed to captures by the queen. 1. ♖xa8



Position after: 1. ♖xa8

This move also poses the threat of ♕e7+! exploiting the pin along the eighth rank. 1... ♖e6+ [1...hxg6 2. ♕e7+ and White wins the queen] 2. ♖g5 ♖xg6+ 3. ♖f4 ♖d6+



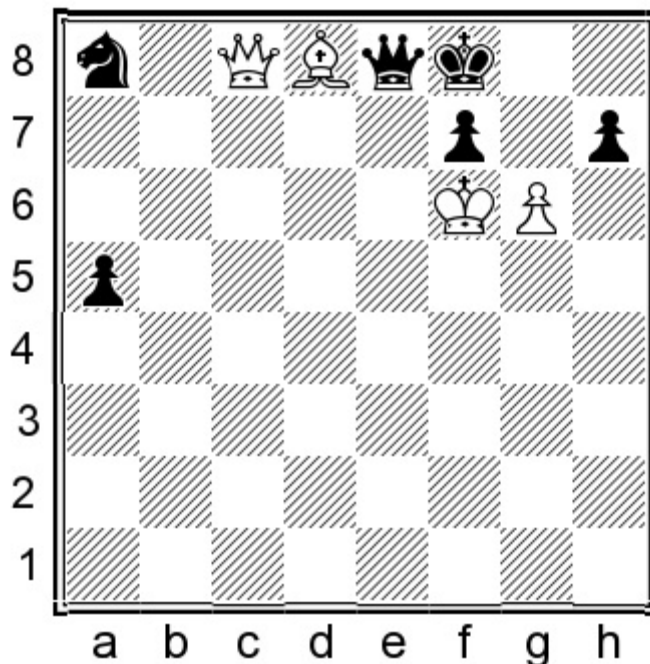
Position after: 3... ♖d6+

And as we have already seen, without the white pawn on the board, White cannot win even with a piece up.

G) Similar is 1. ♖xa5 ♖e6+.

Back to 1.♔c8.

1.♔c8!



Position after: 1.♔c8!

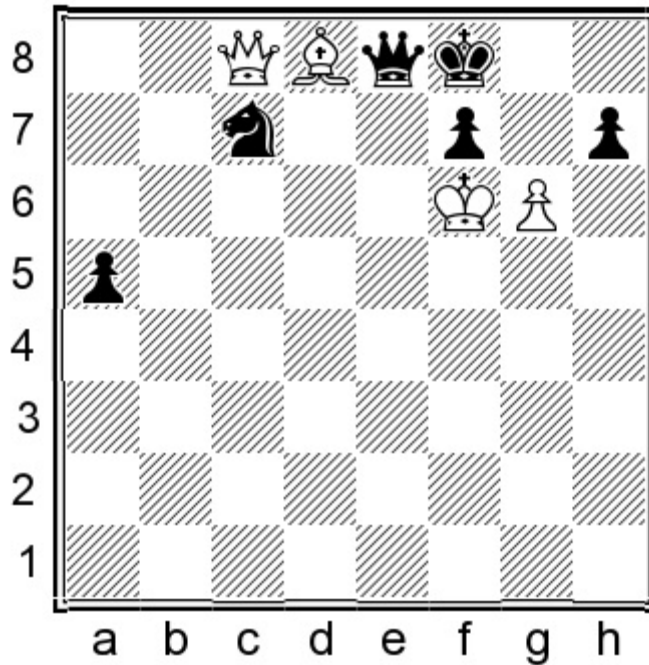
What are Black's defenses after 1.♔c8?

1...♔g8!

Great defense, which you can once again solve with the candidate moves after examining the checks and captures. This is a move that poses threats, taking on g6 or giving check on e6, while at the same time defending against ♕e7+.

A) Now 1...♔e6+ does not work for Black due to 2.♔xe6 fx6 3.gxh7 and the white pawn cannot be stopped.

B) 1...♖c7

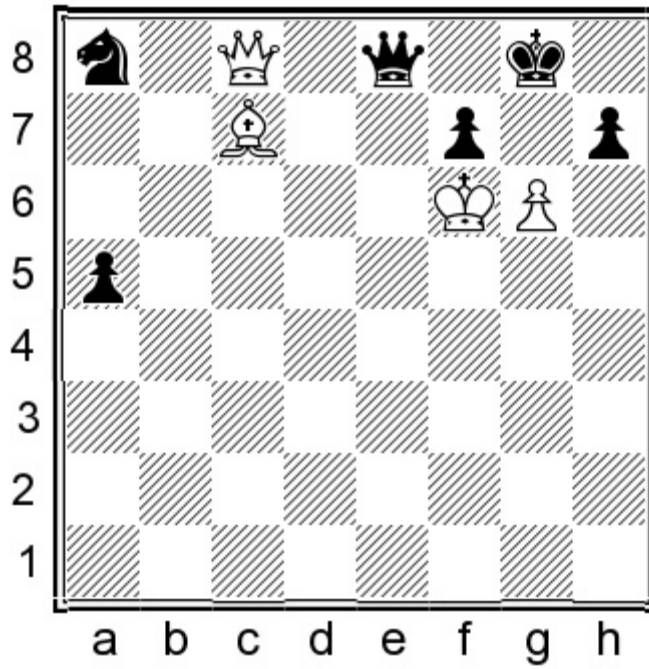


Position after: 1...Nc7

it is important to notice this defense (in chess you need to learn how to defend, not just attack!) since White cannot take the knight with his bishop, but only with the queen. But 2.♙e7+! still crushes the black defense due to the pin! [If White takes the knight with the queen 2.♙xc7 there follows 2...♙e6+ with the defense we have already seen.] 2...♙g8 3.gxf7+ and Black loses the queen!

White must act quickly because Black's threats are important. Which move can neutralize those two threats?

2.♙c7!!



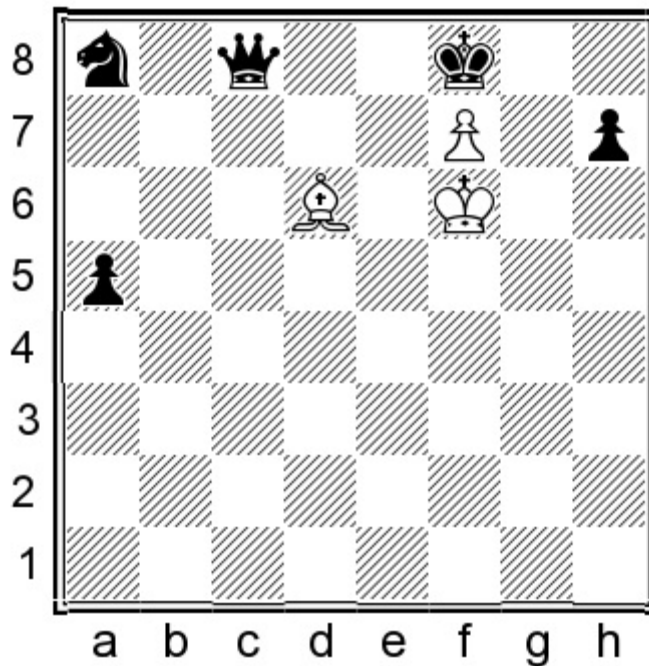
Position after: 2. ♔c7!!

The move that creates a threat!

If 2...gxf7+ again 2...♔h8! follows.

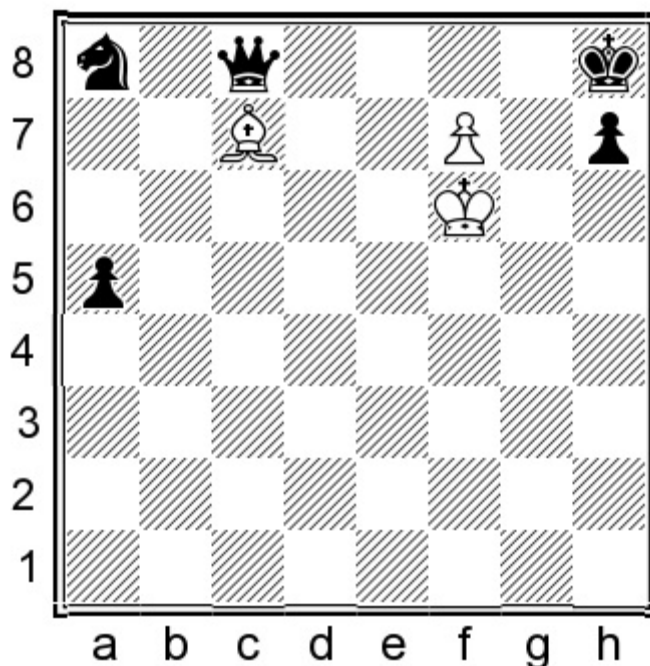
2...♔xc8 3.gxf7+ ♔h8

3...♔f8 4.♔d6#!



Position after: 4. ♔d6#!

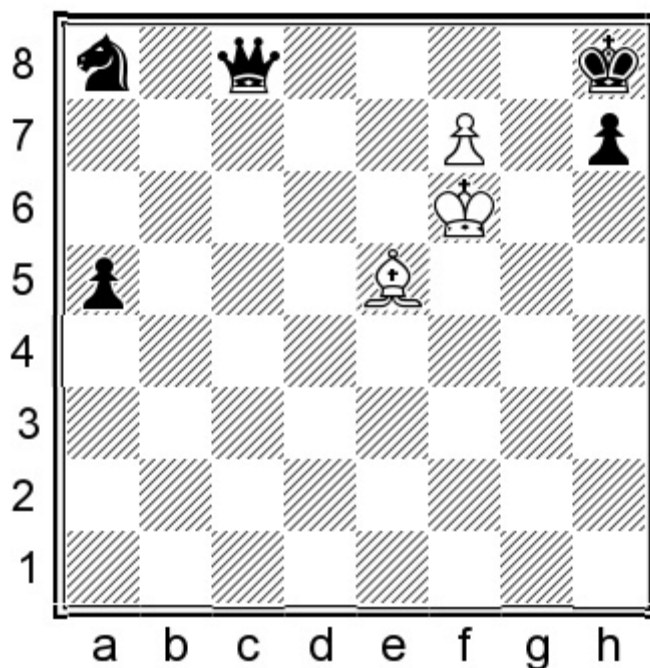
is an important point of White's combination.



Position after: 3... ♖h8

Now if we stop, it seems to us that White has gone in the wrong direction. The queen is lost and Black can always give his queen for the pawn if necessary. But this is actually a beautiful position that is some kind of unusual pinning and domination by the pieces of small value (bishop and pawn) against the more powerful opponent's pieces (queen, knight, two pawns).

4. ♕e5!



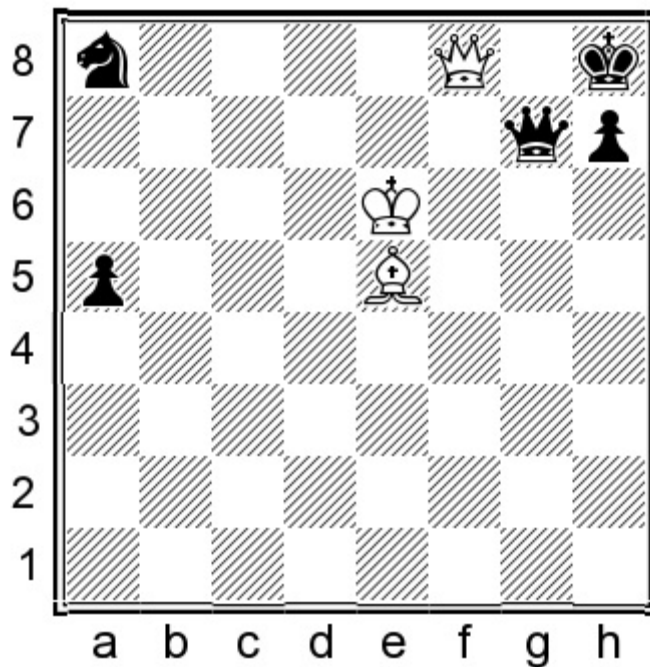
Position after: 4. ♔e5!

This move poses the threat of moving the king to deliver a discovered check which is also mate.

How can Black stop this? He must attack the bishop with his queen, ready to sacrifice the queen because other moves do not save him. At the same time it must also control White's pawn promotion square. It is also important that this queen sacrifice for the white bishop is with a check! So what is the only move that fulfils both functions?

4... ♕c5!

A) 4... ♕f8 5. ♔e6+ ♕g7 6. f8=♕#



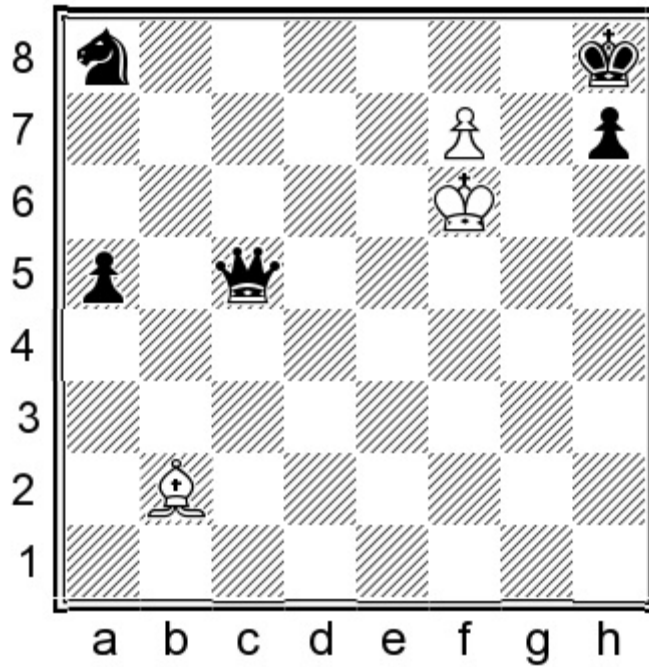
Position after: 6.f8=♕#

Pinning!

B) 4...h5 5. ♔g6#

It is clear that White should not allow the black queen to sacrifice itself for the bishop, so it is necessary to move it.

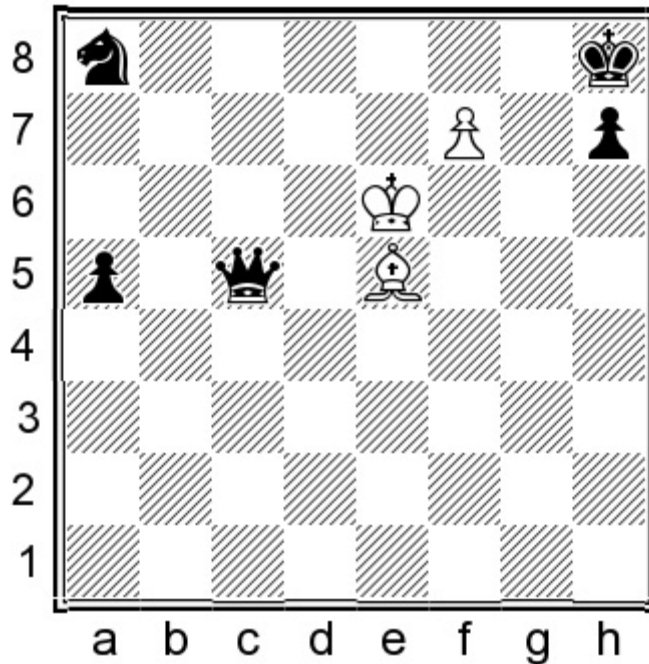
5. ♔b2



Position after: 5. ♔b2

Now White sets up the ♔e6 mate threat! White needs to move the bishop to a safe square and b2 is the right one. When you play through this example to the end, it will be clear to you why this square and not a1 is correct.

5. ♔e6+?

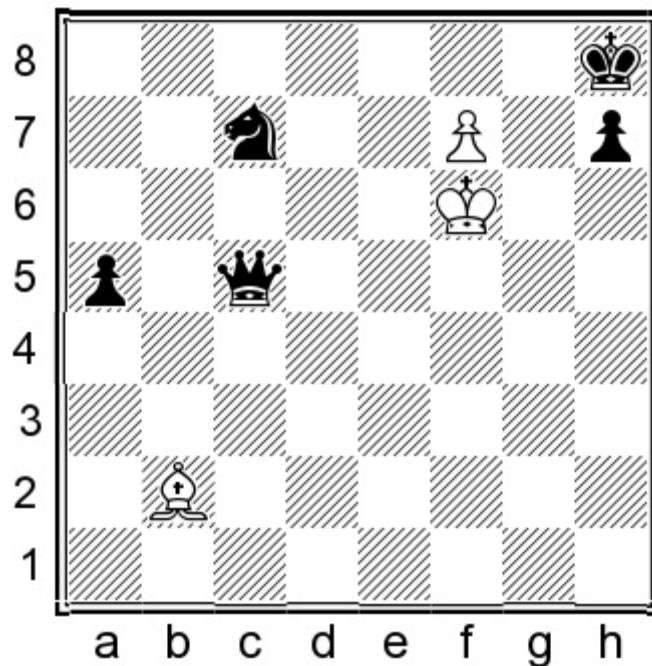


Position after: 5. ♔e6+?

5... ♙xe5+ That is why it is important that the sacrifice is with the check so that Black is on time to

catch the f-pawn and prevent its promotion! 6. ♔xe5 ♕g7 And Black wins.

5... ♖c7!!

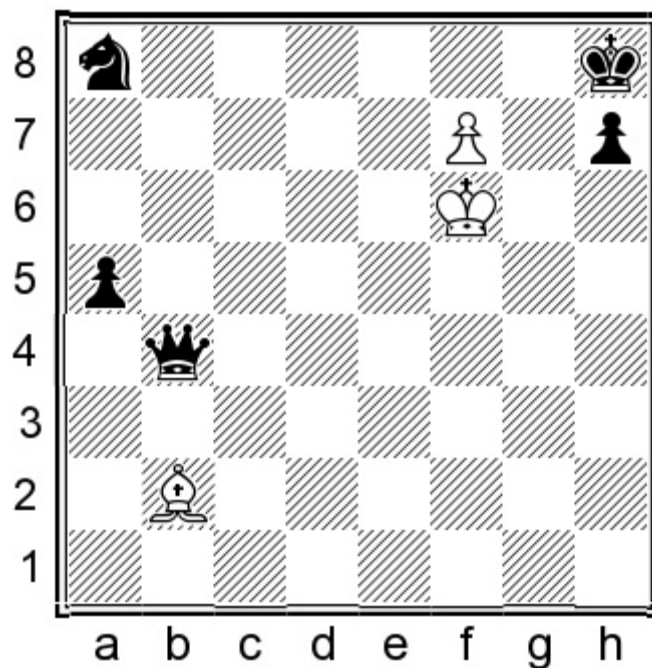


Position after: 5... ♖c7!!

Another great defense! Black prevents the ♕e6 threat.

A) Now Black does not save himself by attacking the bishop since the capture would not be check.

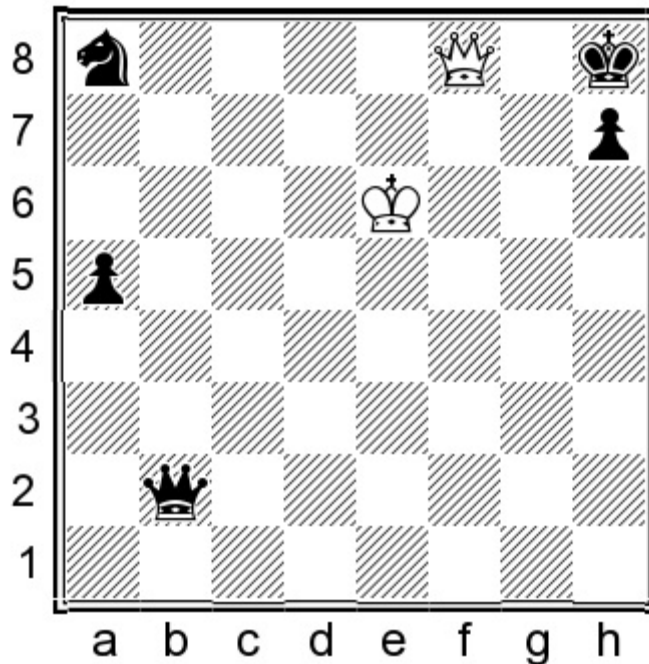
5... ♕b4



Position after: 5... ♖b4

6. ♔e6+ ♗xb2 7. f8=♚#

B) 5... ♗f2+ 6. ♔e6+ ♗xb2 7. f8=♚#

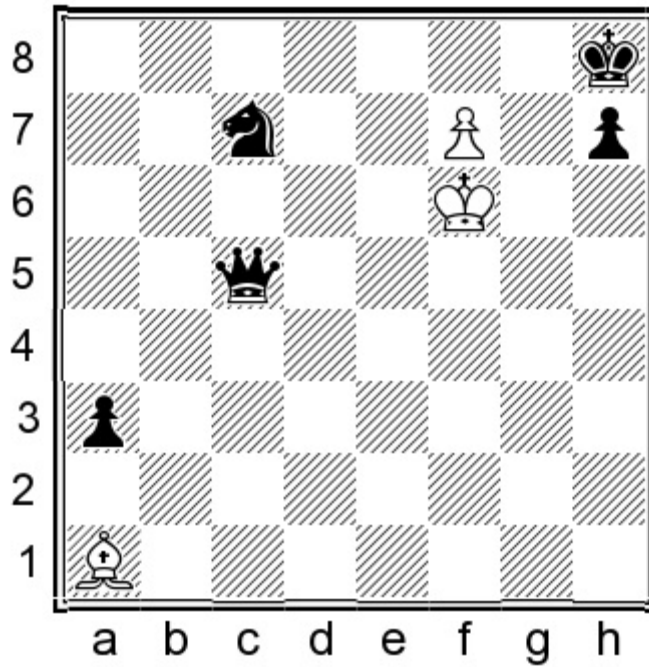


Position after: 7.f8=♚#

Now we come to a very important moment in chess, the question which is important to remember and ask yourself during games: what would the opponent play if it were his move? The knight cannot move from the c7-square since it must control the e6-square. The black queen must keep its eye on the f8-square and at the same time keep control of the fifth rank so that the white king cannot move there with a discovered check. The pawn on h7 can't move because then White gets the g6-square for his king and can activate the discovered check. That leaves Black with only the a-pawn to move, but the pawn is an easy target for White!

6. ♖a1 a4 7. ♖b2 a3 8. ♖a1

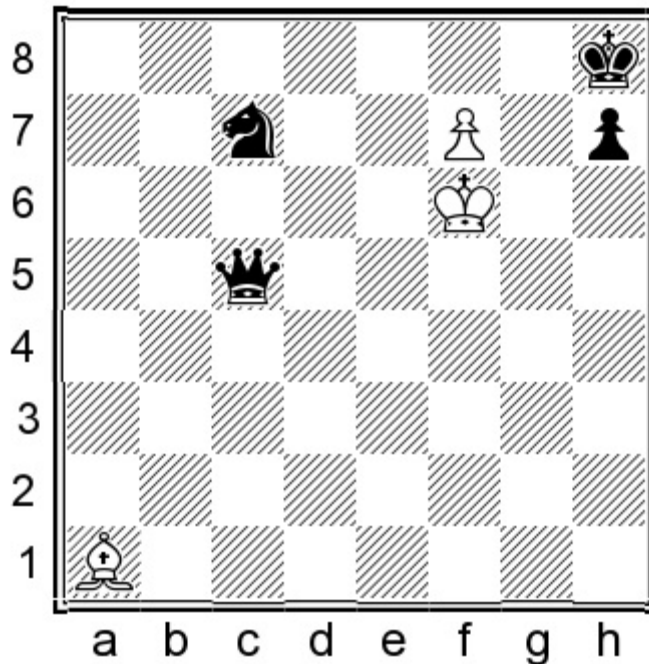
Precisely because of this position it is important that White was accurate on the fifth move since if White were now on the move, Black would win!



Position after: 8. ♔a1

8...a2 9. ♕b2 a1=♚ 10. ♕xa1

After the a-pawn has disappeared, Black must make a move that destroys his defensive position and thus loses the game.



Position after: 10. ♕xa1

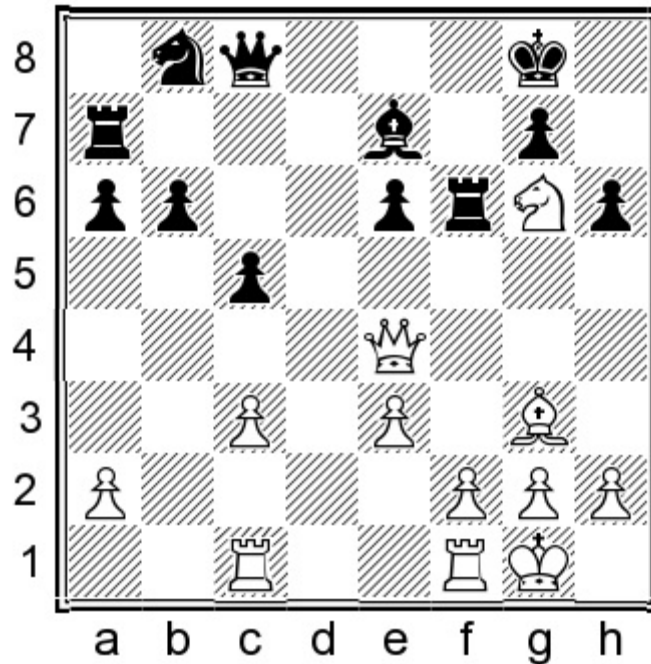
10...♞d5+ 11. ♖e6+ ♞c3 12. ♕xc3+ ♚xc3 13. f8=♚#

Chapter 2

Candidate moves

Example 1

From Panczyk – Schurade
Zakopane 1978



FACTORS IN POSITION ASSESSMENT

How to correctly assess your position and identify potentially serious weaknesses in your opponent's camp?

1. Material: any chess player when looking at a new position will first count the pieces and pawns on the board.
2. King safety: after checking the material, an important factor for assessing the position is the kings' placement. If the opponent's king is much more exposed, that can compensate for a lack of material, so this factor is very important.
3. Activity of the pieces: if the first two factors are approximately equal, more active pieces can give a big advantage to the side that has them.
4. Pawn structure: When all of the previous factors are relatively equal, that practically means that the dynamics and tactical possibilities on the board are also equal. In that case a better pawn structure as a positional factor may give a long-term advantage to one of the players. A player with a weaker structure, in the long run, must strive for advantages in the first three factors, or else he might well end up in a position full of strategic problems with his weak structure.

If we now try to apply these factors to the position in the diagram, the evaluation should be as follows.

1. The material is equal.

2. White's king is completely safe while the black king is not fully shielded due to the lack of a pawn on f7, which has allowed White to gain a nice outpost on g6 for his knight. So White is better in this factor.

3. Of all the black pieces only the rook on f6 attacks the white knight, all the other pieces do not attack anything, they mostly defend their colleagues. An important factor is that they are not protected by their pawns, thus becoming potentially unprotected or overloaded pieces. White's pieces are better because the white knight attacks Black's bishop and the white bishop attacks Black's knight. Also the white queen is very active, and the rooks can quickly occupy the open d- or b-files. The conclusion is that White has more active pieces.

4. The pawn structure is currently better for White due to the weakened black king and a weak pawn on e6. However if Black manages to exchange the queens his king would no longer be threatened and he might be able to create a passed pawn on the queenside, where he has three pawns against two white ones (this is called a pawn majority). So White should be cautious because it is harder for him to create a passed pawn on the kingside where he has his own majority. So White has a better structure right now, but if the queens get traded he needs to be careful.

Summing up all of these factors, we can come to a clear conclusion that White is better and that he should think about exploiting this advantage in an effective manner. So we move on to the candidate moves.

1. Every check should be considered: knight takes on e7. 2. Every capture needs checking: bishop takes the knight on b8. Of course taking with the queen on e6 makes no sense, but you need to think about it at least for a second. 3. Threatening moves: 1.♙h4, 1.♙e5, 1.♖b1. These are obvious moves, but how to find moves which are not obvious? 4. Useful moves: 1.h4 (with the idea of fixing the knight with 2.h5), 1.♖cd1 or 1.♖fd1 (with the idea of activating the rook) and some others.

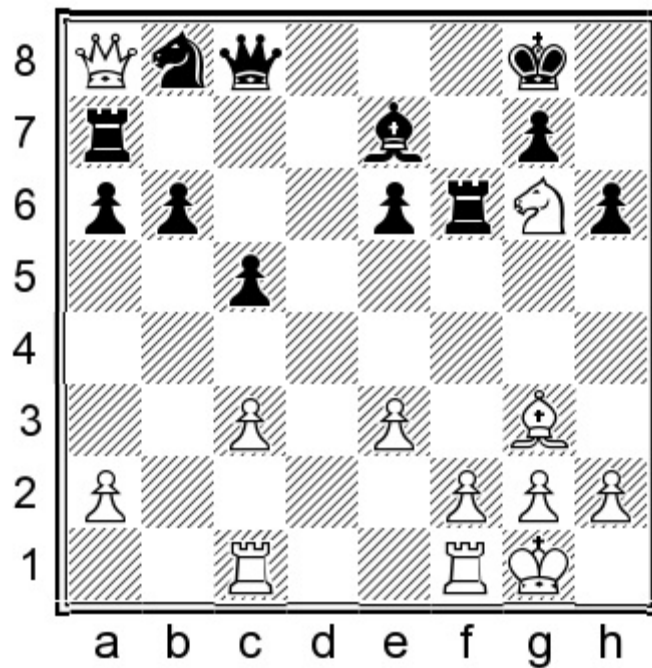
But let's go back to the candidate moves under point 3. How to find another candidate move? It's important to analyze all the opponent's pieces on the board. If there were no black queen on c8, White would just collect the piece by taking the knight with his bishop. That means the queen on c8 is overloaded and we could try to find a way to distract it from the defense of the b8-knight.

In this position it is evident too that, unlike the white rooks, the two black rooks do not have classical harmony. They are not connected and are not standing on the back rank. That's why they are potentially vulnerable. Let's look at the rook on a7. It has to defend the bishop on e7, otherwise White's knight would take the bishop with check and then even the queen. That's quite lot material (a queen and a bishop in two moves!) which White could win if not for the rook on a7.

This is the signal that by distracting the a7-rook White could win material. It means that White can offer a lot of material to this a7-rook (like cheese to a mouse in a mousetrap) just to leave the bishop unprotected, because in the end it would result in big material gains.

Therefore we can conclude that the a7-rook is a very overloaded piece! So which move can force the rook to move? Now you probably realize that the solution is

1. ♔a8!!



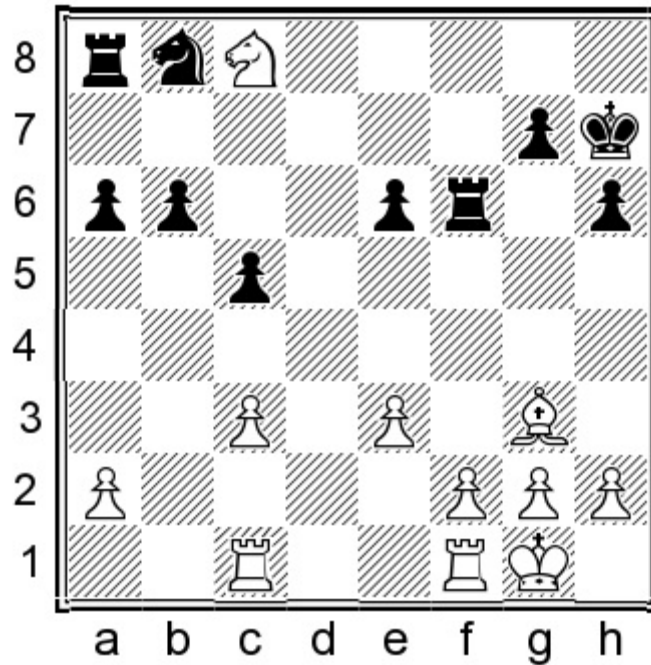
Position after: 1. ♔a8!!

In one move White attacks both rook and knight.

1... ♜xa8

Black's rook is still overloaded after 1... ♜b7 due to 2. ♘xe7+ ♜xe7 3. ♔xb8 and White has won a piece.

2. ♘xe7+ ♜h7 3. ♘xc8



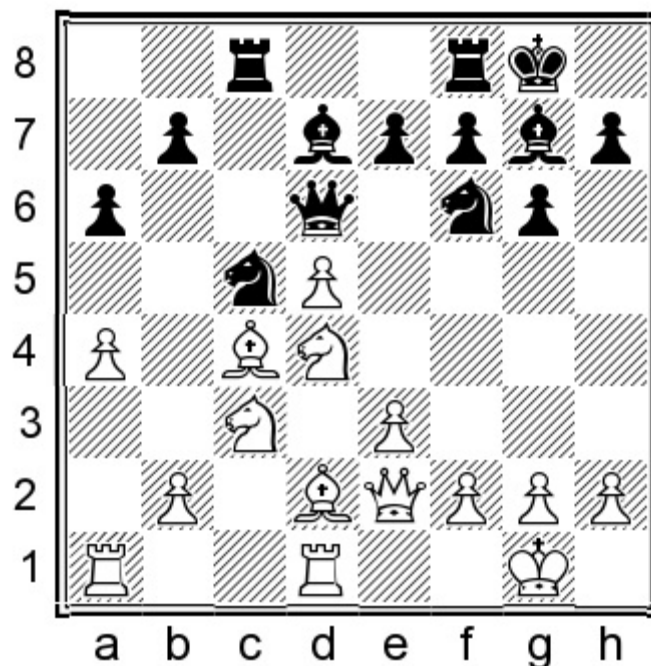
Position after: 3. dxc8

And after the combination White remains a clear piece up! 1-0

Example 2

From Bönsch – Jankovic

Graz 2013



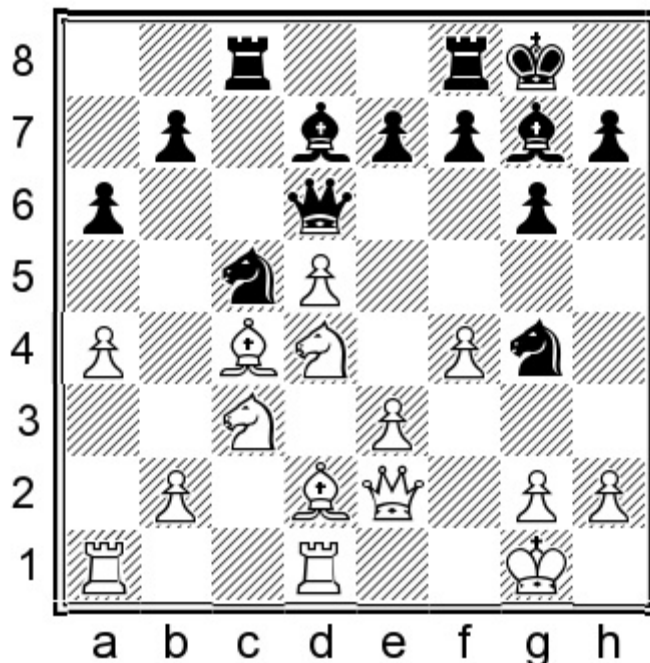
Even though in my head I have a clear system for the candidate moves list, in this example you will see what happens when I do not follow my own principles! The position is from my game against a German grandmaster who has chosen a sideline of the Grünfeld Defense, where White can take a pawn

in the opening, but in return Black gets active play.

14...♘g4!

It is important to know that if you have a fianchetto setup, with the bishop in front of the castled king, then it is very common to jump somewhere with the f3- or f6-knight to open the diagonal for your bishop. Since I was familiar with this principle, it was not difficult for me to decide on this move.

15.f4



Position after: 15.f4

An interesting move, which was played relatively quickly, and with the idea of preventing my mate threat on h2 while at the same time depriving me of a jump to e5. Yet if my opponent was aware of my system of candidate moves list, he would certainly have decided for another move!

A) 15.g3 would weaken the light squares around the king and in the long run again I would have had a good game.

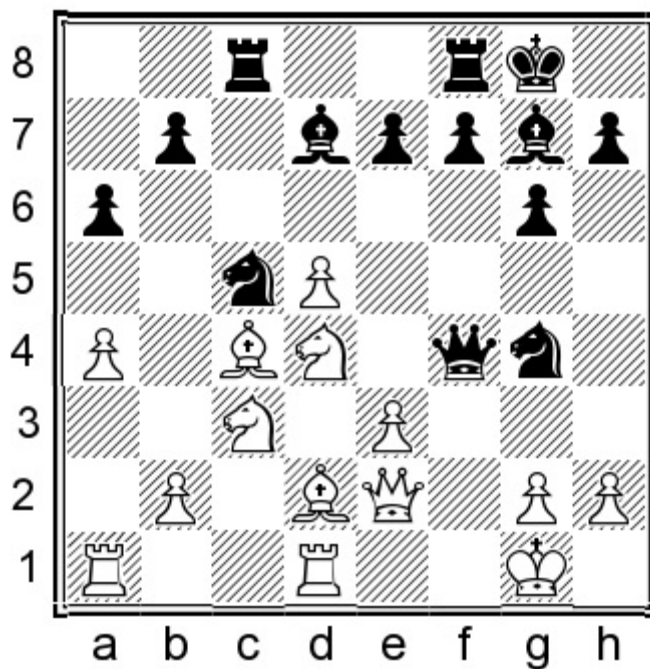
B) So the safest option was 15.♘f3.

Now let's stop for a moment and go through the list of candidate moves. 1. Every check should be considered: there are no checks. 2. Every capture is an option: try to count them all by yourself, and we will return to this point later. 3. Moves that pose a threat: 1...e5, 1...e6, 1...b5. 4. Useful move: 1...♖fd8, 1...♗cb8, 1...h5.

Now let's return to captures (point 2): 1...♘xa4, 1...♙xa4, 1...♙xd4, 1...♘xe3, 1...♘xh2. Is that all? As I have already told you, though you may dismiss a move in a millisecond, it should cross your mind, otherwise you will miss great opportunities. As I did in this game! There are two more captures:

1...♔xd5 and 1...♔xf4. I did not think about those two captures because I didn't go through my check list! If I had done it, I would have surely found that

15...♔xf4!!



Position after: 15...♔xf4!!

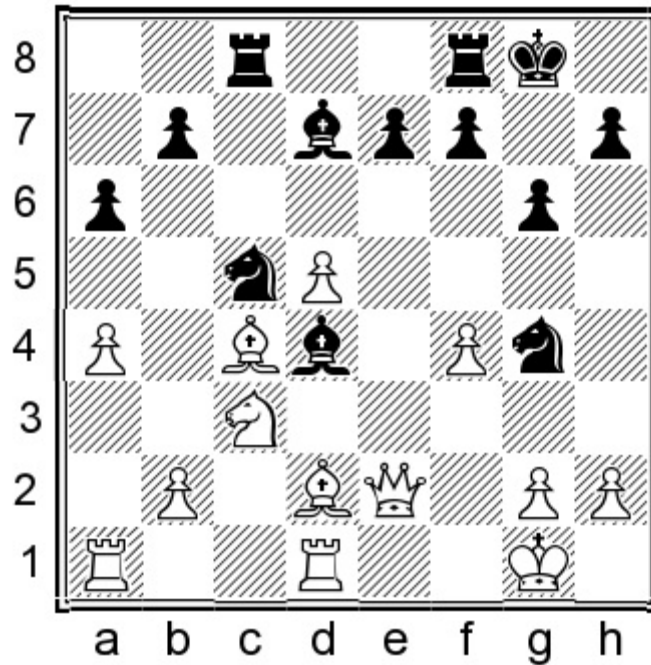
immediately leads to a good outcome for me!

15...♞f6 is the move that I played, which is not bad, but later with my poor play I suffered a defeat.

16.exf4

White is of course forced to take the queen.

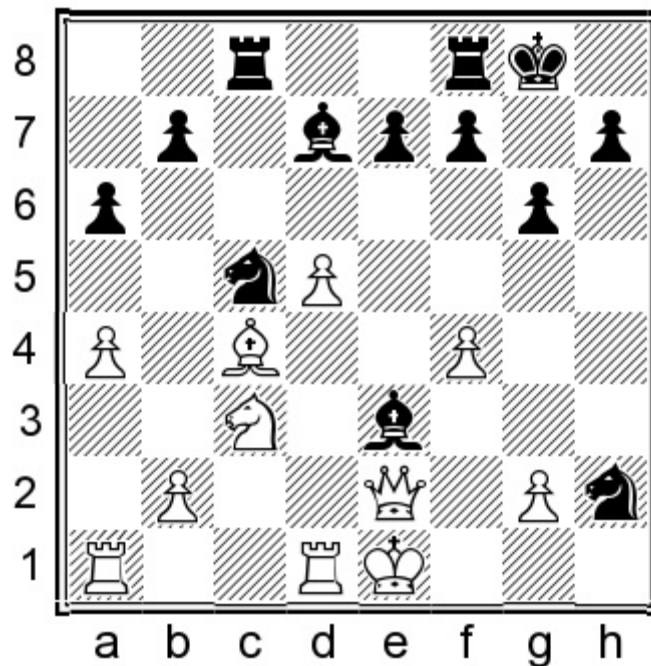
16...♙xd4+



Position after: 16... ♖xd4+

17. ♔f1

A) An interesting possibility for White is to give up his bishop and enter the same position as after 17. ♔f1 since then Black cannot play the same way. However by playing differently Black anyway keeps a pull. 17. ♗e3 ♗xe3+ 18. ♔f1 ♘h2+ 19. ♔e1

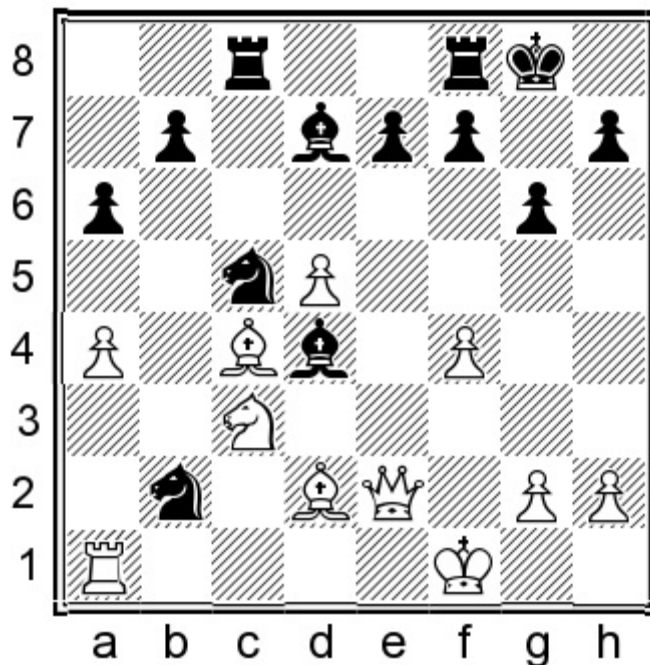


Position after: 19. ♔e1

19... ♗xf4 and although Black has a bishop, knight and two pawns (a total of 8 units against 9 of

White) his pieces are much better placed and White's very weak light squares will decide matters. [19...♔g4 20.♚xe3 is the point of White's bishop sac and the difference compared to 17.♔f1.]

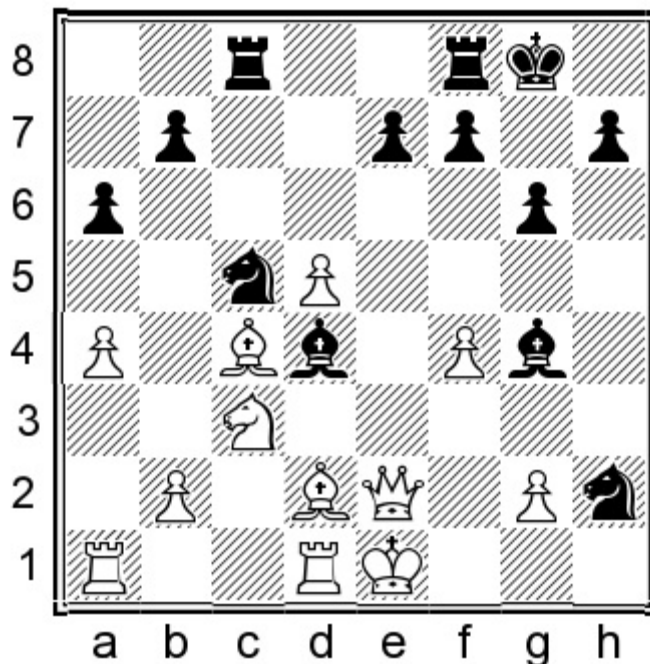
B) 17.♔h1 ♖f2+ 18.♔g1 ♜xd1+ 19.♔f1 ♜xb2



Position after: 19...♜xb2

With his last moves Black has won a rook, knight and two pawns, moreover soon the third white pawn will fall. And with the weak white king it all adds up to a winning position for Black.

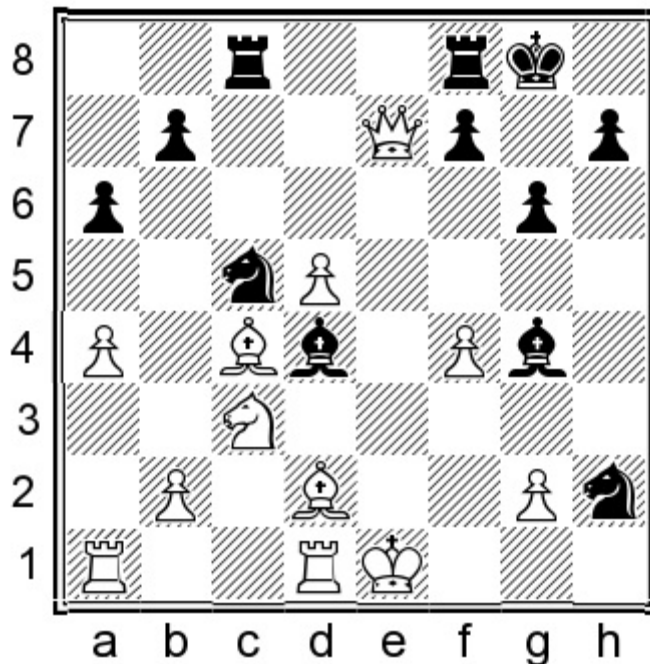
17...♜xh2+ 18.♔e1 ♔g4!



Position after: 18... ♔g4!

This move is crucial in the calculations of the queen sacrifice. If you do not realize that the white queen has no good squares, you will not understand the power of 15... ♕f4!.

19. ♕xe7



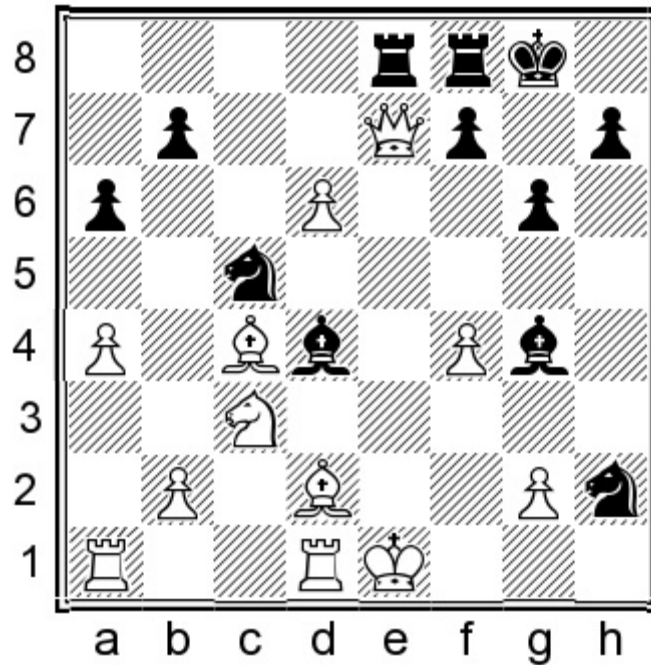
Position after: 19. ♕xe7

The only move where White does not lose the queen for a light piece. In this way White will at least get a rook for the queen. Now it is an extremely important moment – with which rook to attack the white queen?

There is a famous saying that you can see how strong a player is by seeing the way he places his rooks! Sometimes it is very difficult to see the difference when choosing which rook to place on a certain square. Usually it does make a difference, but it is difficult to understand.

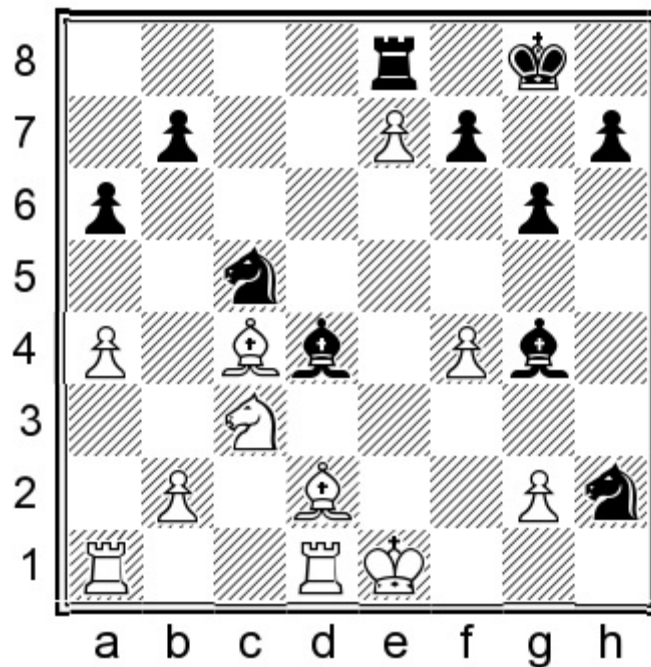
19... ♖fe8!

19... ♖ce8? is a weaker move due to 20.d6.



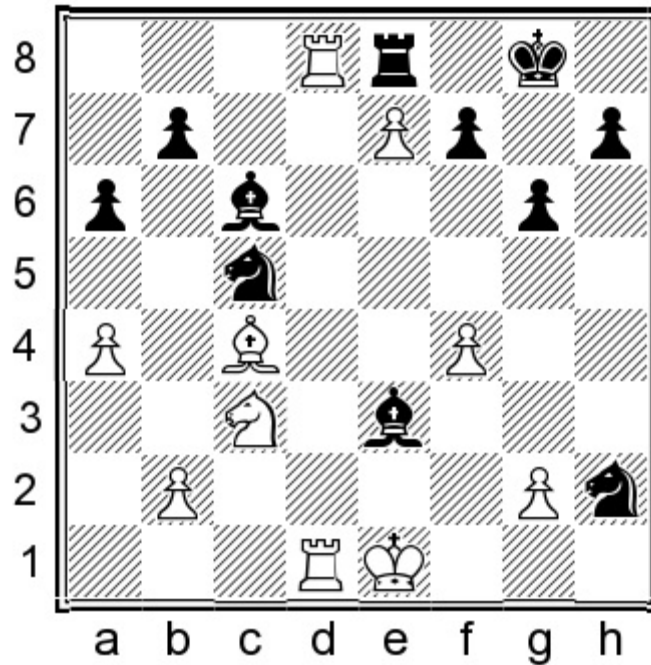
Position after: 20.d6

A) 20...♖xe7+? loses because of 21.dxe7 ♜e8



Position after: 21...♜e8

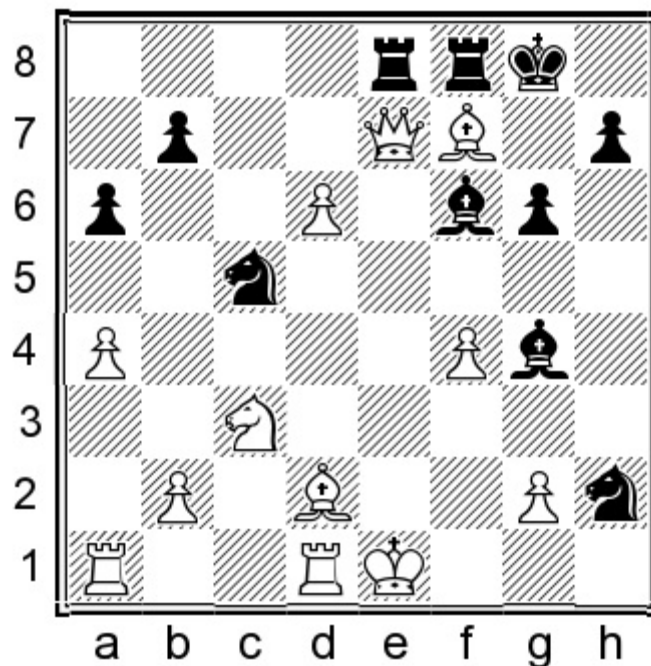
and now the very important move 22.♙e3!! Remember, when a pawn is very close to promotion, sometimes miracles happen! 22...♖xe3 [22...♖xe7 23.♖xd4 ♜xe3+ 24.♙f2 ♜e8 25.♙g3 and White wins one of Black's light pieces. Remember, when there are no queens on the board, even the king can be a strong attacker!] 23.♖d8 ♙d7 24.♖d1 ♙c6



Position after: 24...♙c6

25.♖xe8+ ♜xe8 26.♖d8 And Black loses the bishop.

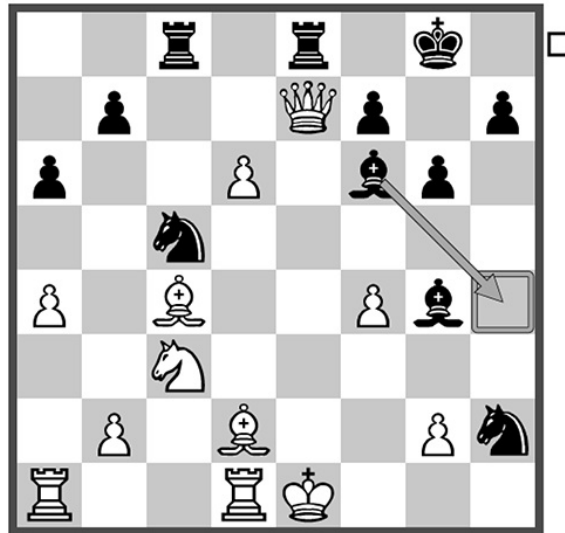
B) 20...♙f6 Now it is important that White does not yield to the temptation to check his opponent, but plays the cool-headed 21.♙f2! [21.♙xf7+?



Position after: 21...♙xf7+?

is bad due to 21...♙g7 22.♙xe8+ ♜xe7 23.dxe7 ♘d3# with mate!] 21...♙xe7 22.dxe7 ♖xe7 And now White, by moving his rook, wins the wandering knight. 23.♖h1 White has a material advantage.

20.d6 ♖f6

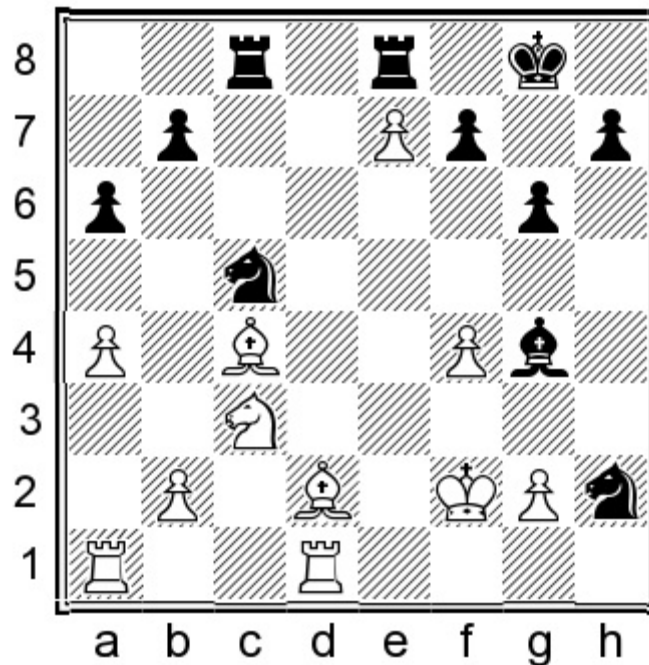


Position after: 20... ♖f6

An extremely important move, with which Black attacks the white queen on e7, and at the same time threatens mate on h4!

21. ♙xe8+

A) Now it is no good for White to play 21. ♔f2 due to 21... ♗xe7 22.dxe7

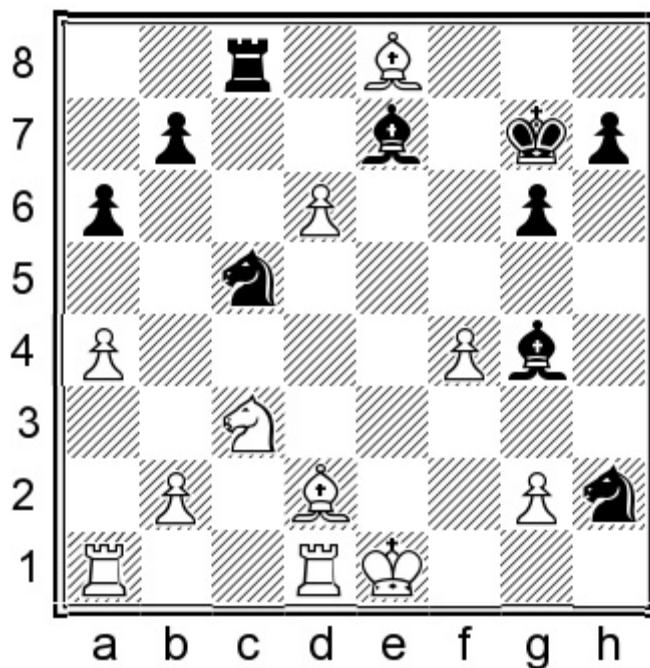


Position after: 22.dxe7

22... ♗xd1! And since the black rook is not on f8, the capture dxe7 is no longer an attack on the rook.

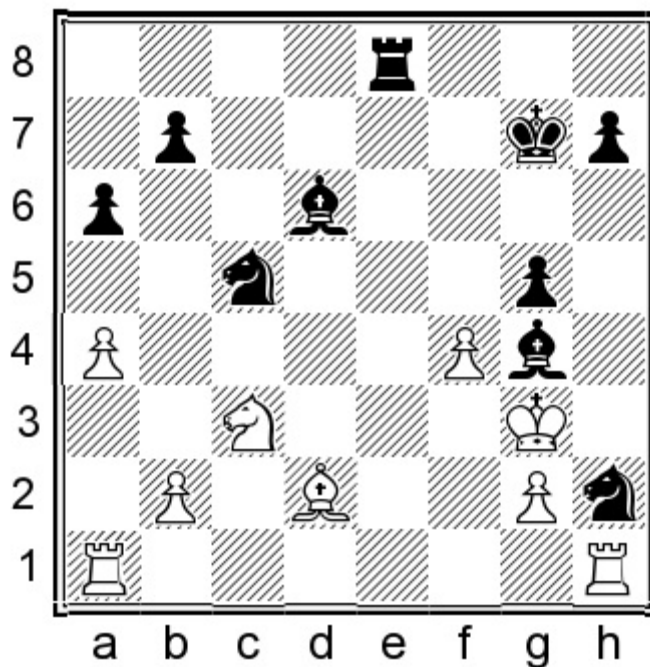
So Black has time to take the white rook, which leaves him with a material plus!

B) 21.♙xf7+ ♔g7 22.♙xe8+ ♙xe7



Position after: 22...♙xe7

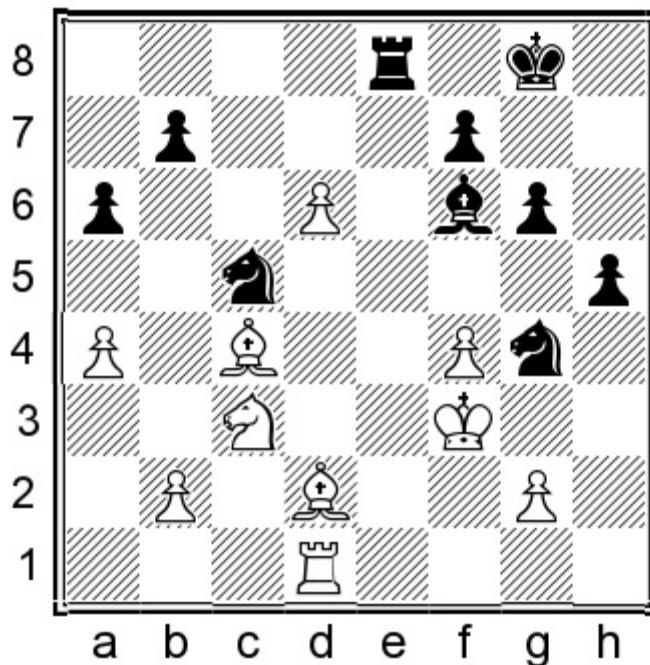
23.♔f2 [23.dxe7 ♘d3# is the mate we have already mentioned] 23...♙xd6 24.♖h1 ♜xe8 25.♔g3 g5



Position after: 25...g5

Black will have sufficient counterattack regardless of the loss of his knight.

21...♞xe8+ 22.♔f2 ♕xd1 23.♞xd1 ♖g4+ 24.♔f3 h5



Position after: 24...h5

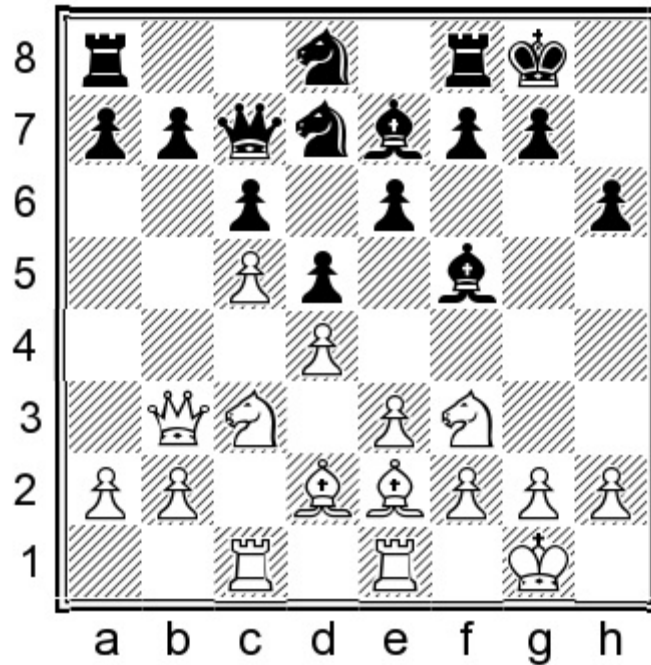
In the arising position Black has no cause for concern. This position would have come up with the best play by both sides, but the queen sac on f4 would surely have had a very unpleasant psychological effect on my opponent and it is a question of how he would cope with that!

Example 3

From Kreisl – Jankovic

Graz 2013

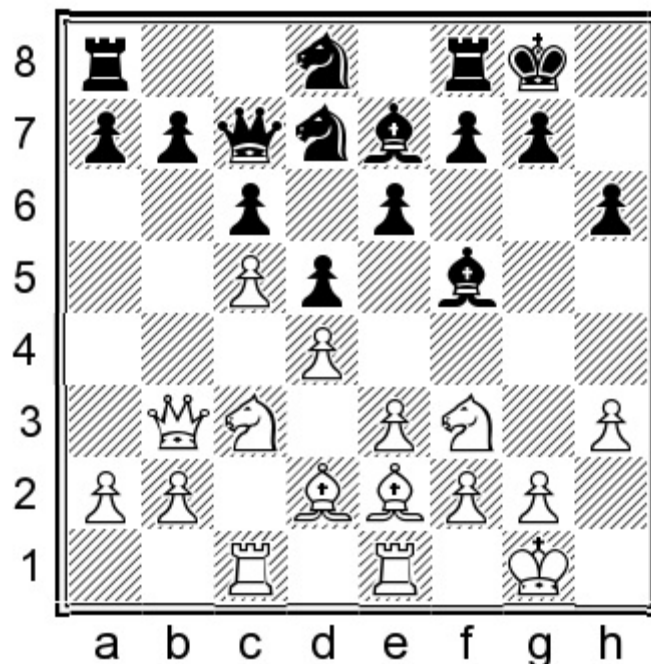
Calculating moves through my candidate moves list will ease the process of searching for the strongest move, yet it is important to develop that feeling for the opponent's possibilities as well!



In this game that feeling helped me to avoid blundering after my opponent played

14.h3

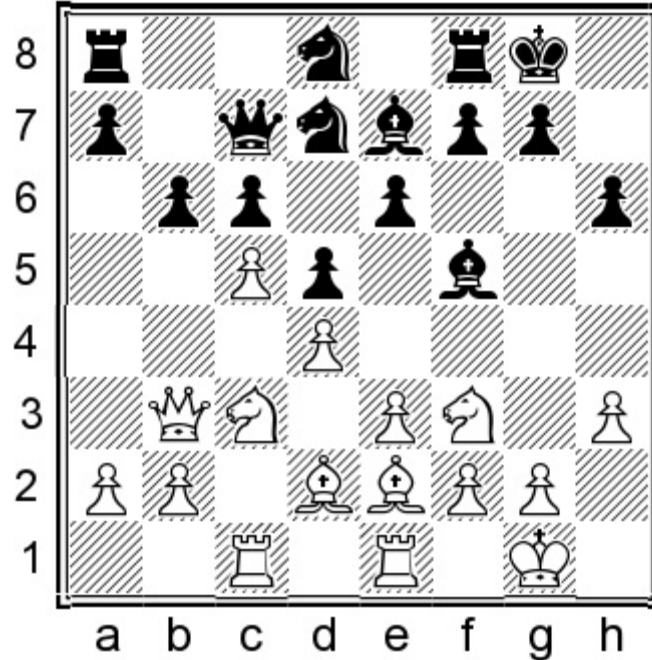
This is a classic type of position where White has more space and a pawn chain with which he wants to build his play on the queenside. Usually, the strongest reaction to this wing expansion by White is counterattack in the center with the ...e5-break since after White takes this pawn, his c5-pawn begins to hang. I was thinking about the move 14...e5, but in the end I decided on a better move, 14...b6! What would happen if I did play the obvious move?



Position after: 14.h3

14...e5?

14...b6!



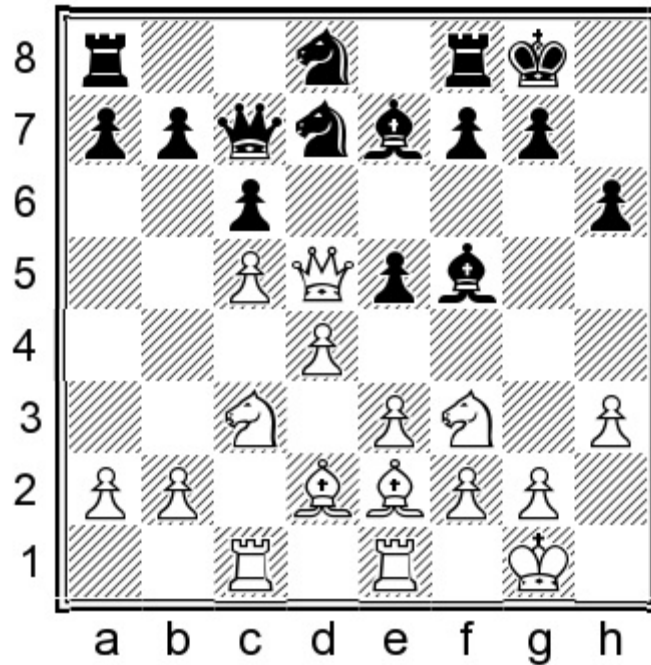
Position after: 14...b6!

This is the best move. It also breaks White's dominance on the queenside, and gives Black has a good position.

15. ♖xe5

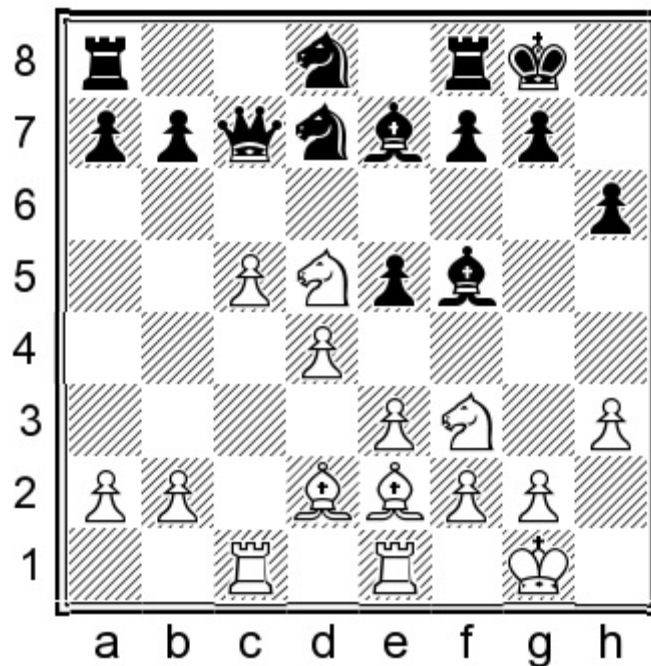
A) Weaker is 15.dxe5? since the knight on d7 hasn't been exchanged so now Black can take 15... ♘xc5, when he has a much better position.

B) But the move which caused me to abandon 14...e5 is a fantastic move: 15. ♔xd5!!



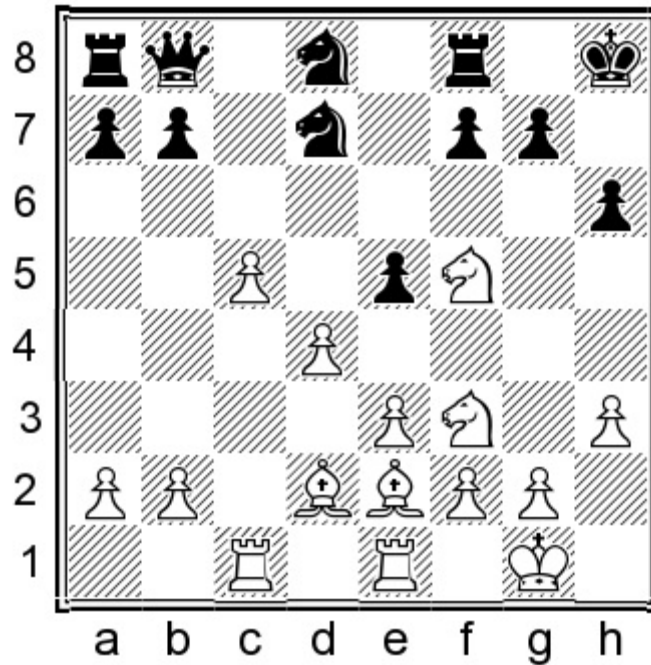
Position after: 15. ♕xd5!!

If you do not hear in your head the sentence you have learned in this book, “Every capture should be considered!”, you would easily miss such a move! 15...cxd5 [White’s queen can escape after 15...♙e6 16.♕e4 f5 17.♕c2 e4 18.♘h2 and White remains a clear pawn up.] 16.♘xd5



Position after: 16. ♘xd5

The only move that allows Black’s queen to avoid the fork when the white knight takes the bishop on e7 is 16...♕b8. But after 17.♘xe7+ ♔h8 the other bishop is also lost. 18.♘xf5

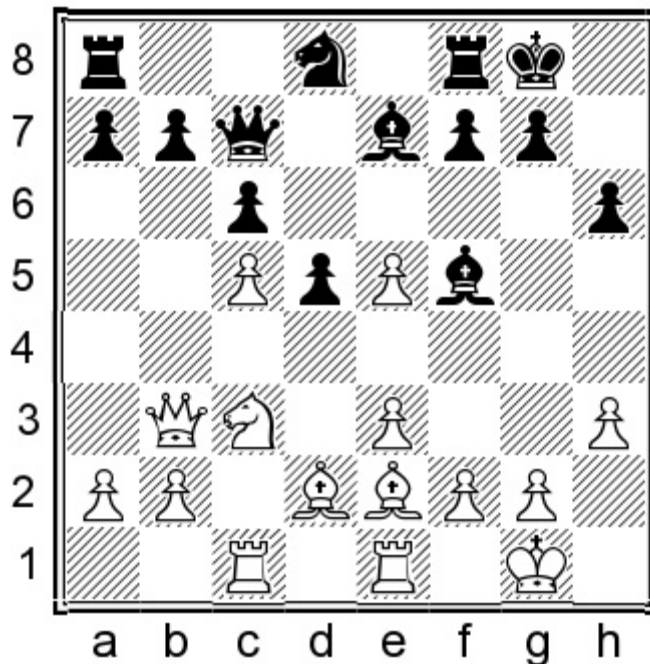


Position after: 18. ♘xf5

After the smoke has cleared, the material on board is as follows: White has two bishops and two pawns for a queen. That is 8 (3 + 3 + 1 + 1) units against Black's 9 units. A much more important factor, though, is that the white pieces are very active in contrast to Black's, which are almost all on the eighth rank and have poor coordination. White's pawns are ready to move forward and very soon Black will have problems getting his knights away from the advancing white pawns. The position favors White.

Maybe the computer could defend itself in such a position, but it is very difficult for a human to avoid making a mistake. In general, there are some positions where it is easier to play for one side (as White or Black) even though they are probably equal with best play. This is exactly such a position: it is much easier to play it with White!

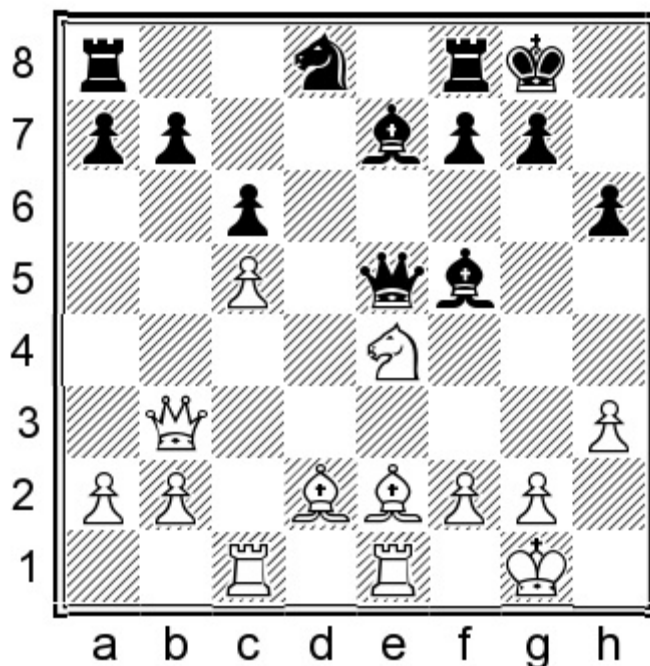
15... ♘xe5 16.dxe5



Position after: 16.dxe5

16...♞e6

Also possible is 16...♞xe5 but in that case White keeps the initiative with 17.e4! It is important to notice the menacing position of the white rook on e1 that x-rays the black queen, and also that the bishop on e7 is a potentially unprotected piece! 17...dxe4 18.♞xe4!

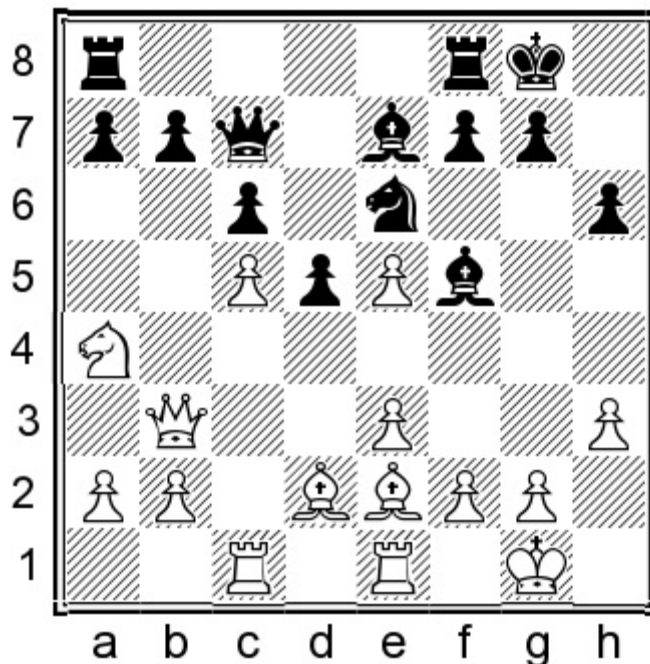


Position after: 18.♞xe4!

18...♞xe4 [18...♞xe4 19.♞d3!] 19.♞g4 ♞d4 20.♞c3 ♞f4 21.♞xf5 ♞xf5 22.♞xe7 And White has

regained the piece.

17. ♖a4



Position after: 17. ♖a4

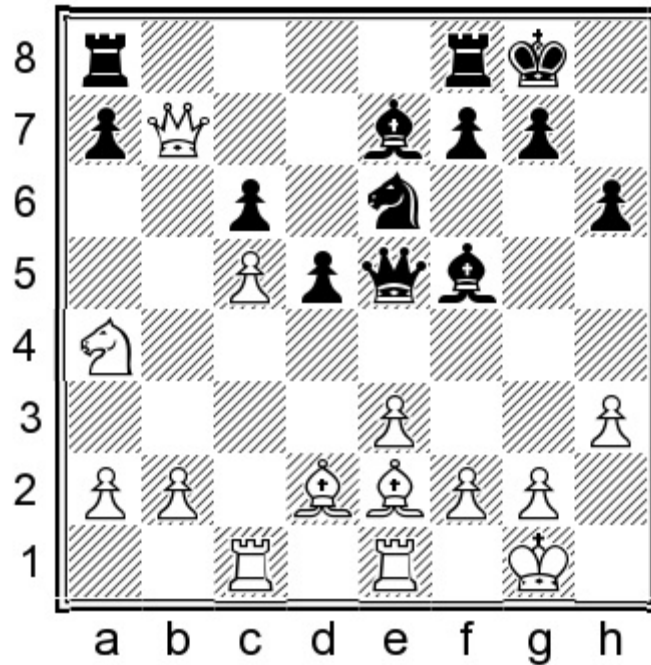
White is a pawn up, but that pawn is a doubled pawn, which means that its value is not the same as the other pawns. The black pieces are very active so Black has several ways to develop an initiative. One is to prepare opening of the position on the queenside.

17... ♟f8!

And after Black pushes the b-pawn, the white knight on a4 starts to look a bit stupid.

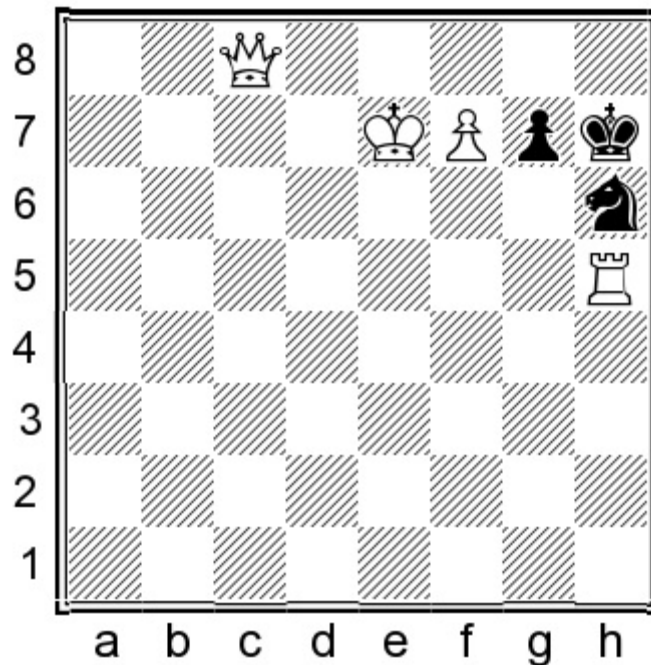
A) The second option is to exchange White's weak e5-pawn by playing 17... f6!?, opening the f-file and starting to attack White on the kingside.

B) After the knight has left the d8-square, from which it defended the b7-pawn, it is of course no longer good to take 17... ♛xe5? due to 18. ♛xb7.



Position after: 18. ♕xb7

Example 4
Mate in two



The question, “What would your opponent play if it were his move”, can make it much easier to find solutions to problems like this one. White delivers mate in two moves, but direct play with queen-promotion or checks does not yield success for him.

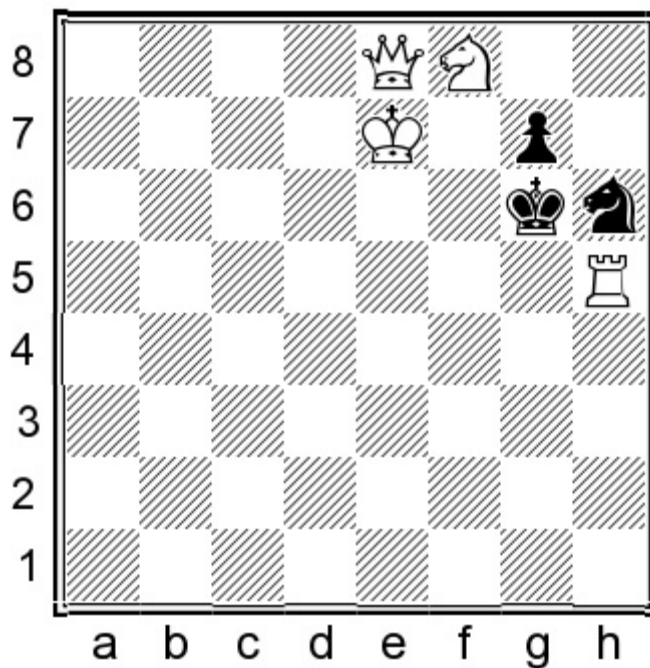
If it were Black to move he cannot move the pawn – because of the pinned knight, ♕g8+ is mate. So his only defense is to escape with the king to g6. How to prevent this and at the same time be ready to

give check on g8? The answer lies in the intersection of the squares g8 and g6, which is the e8-square!

1. ♖e8 ♔g6

1...g6 2. ♖g8#

2.f8=♞#!!

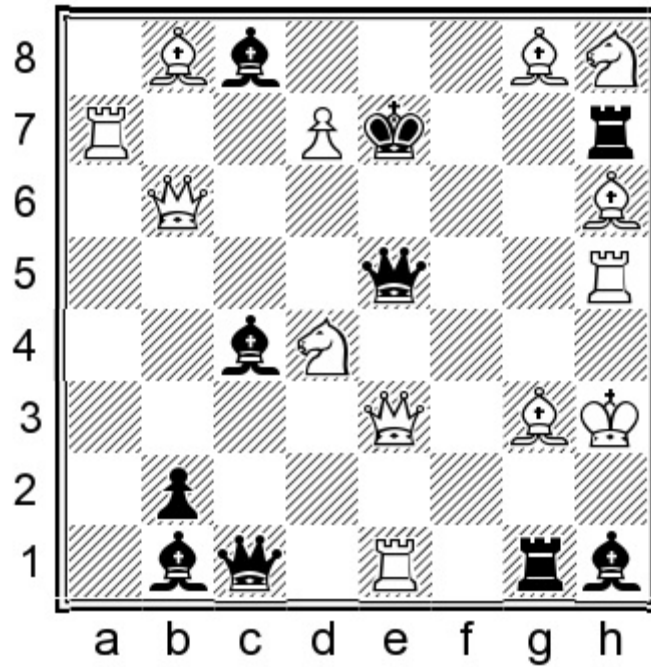


Position after: 2.f8=♞#!!

And with the discovered check, by promotion to a knight White gives mate!

1-0

Example 5
Mate in one



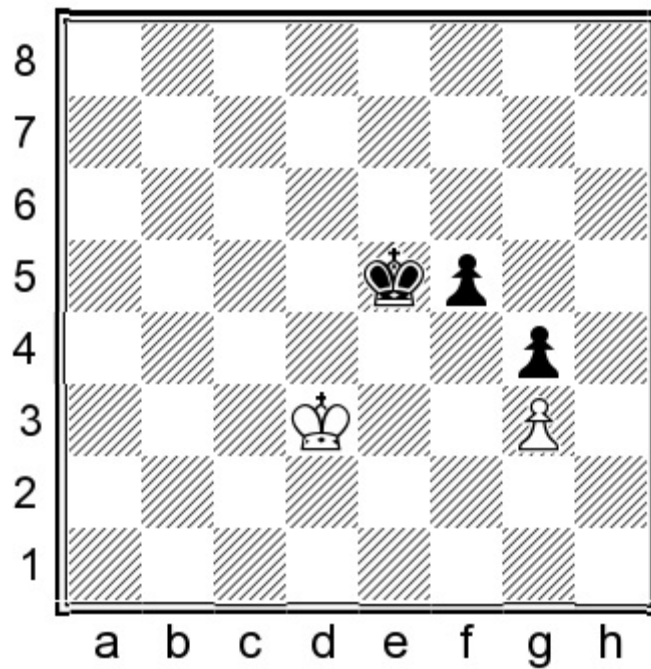
In chess it's much harder to defend than to attack, but in order to attack properly you must notice your opponent's possible defenses. I'll let you solve this example by yourself because it's mate which White gives in just one move! Although it's a mate in one, this example is very useful since you will see how the pieces work.

Chapter 3

Useful endgames

Example 1

From Obolentseva – Osmak
Tarvisio 2017

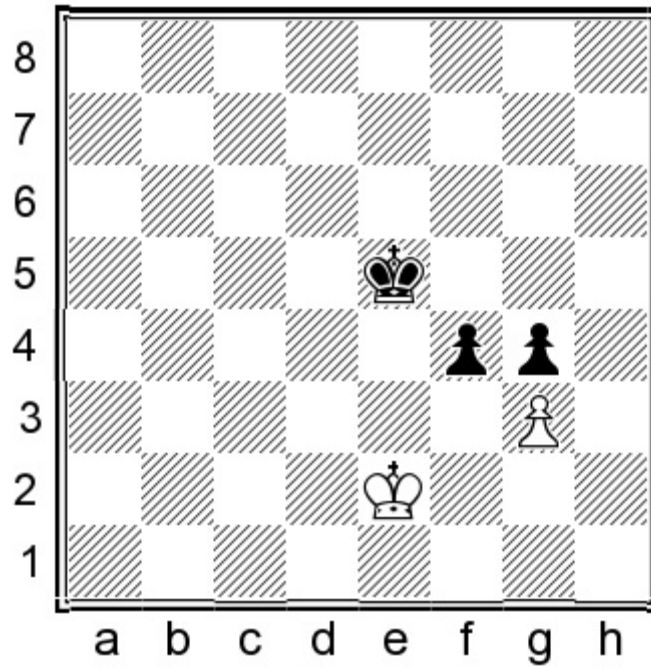


I suppose you have already studied the most basic pawn endgames, so I'll show you some more complicated examples.

59...f4!

A precise move. It reduces the number of pawns on the board, but it creates a passed pawn.

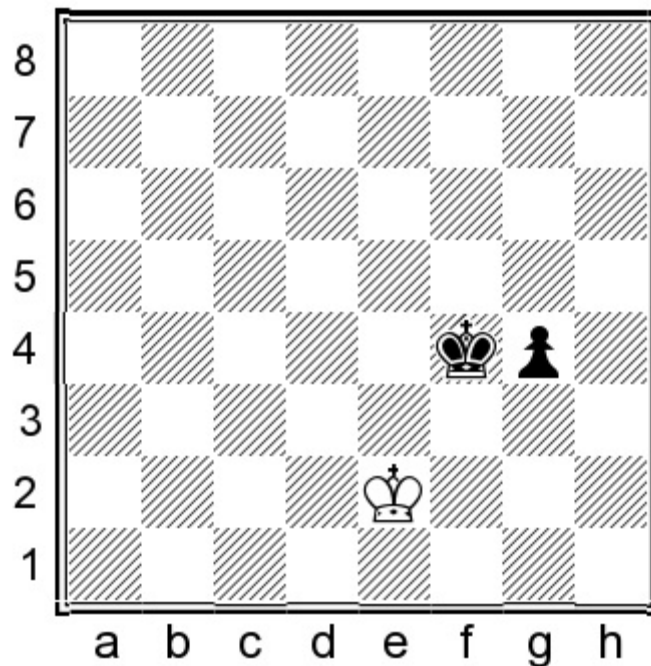
60.♙e2!



Position after: 60. ♔e2!

A good defensive attempt since now Black has to spot the winning method, which is not obvious.

60.gxf4+ ♔xf4 61.♔e2



Position after: 61. ♔e2

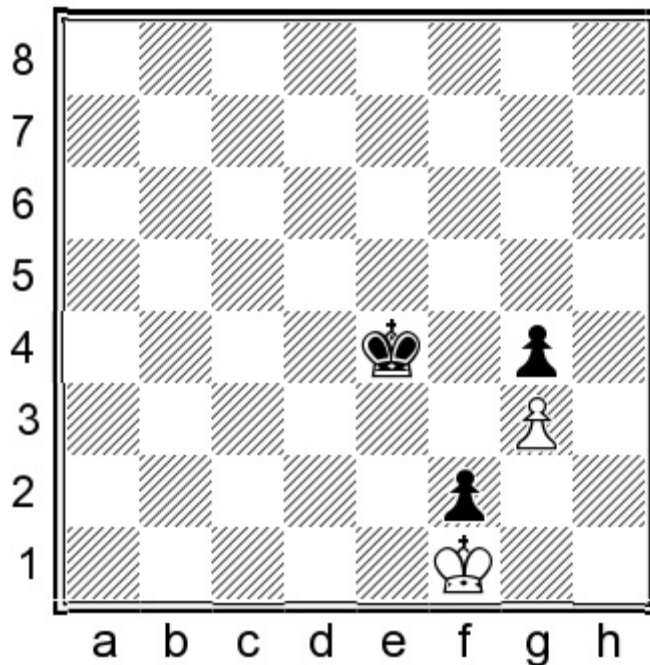
And now the black king has to go in front of his pawn in order to reach the h2-square. 61...♔g3!

62.♔f1 ♔h2 The king guides his pawn to the promotion square, the position is won!

60...fxg3?

Letting White off the hook!

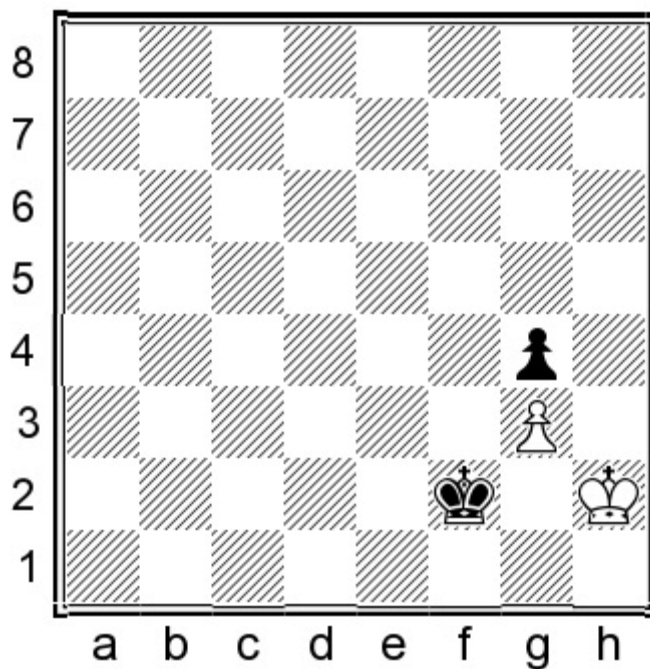
Winning was 60...f3+! 61.♔f2 ♕e4 62.♔f1 [62.♔e1 ♕e3 63.♔f1 f2 64.♔g2 ♕e2 and Black's f-pawn will queen] 62...f2!



Position after: 62...f2!

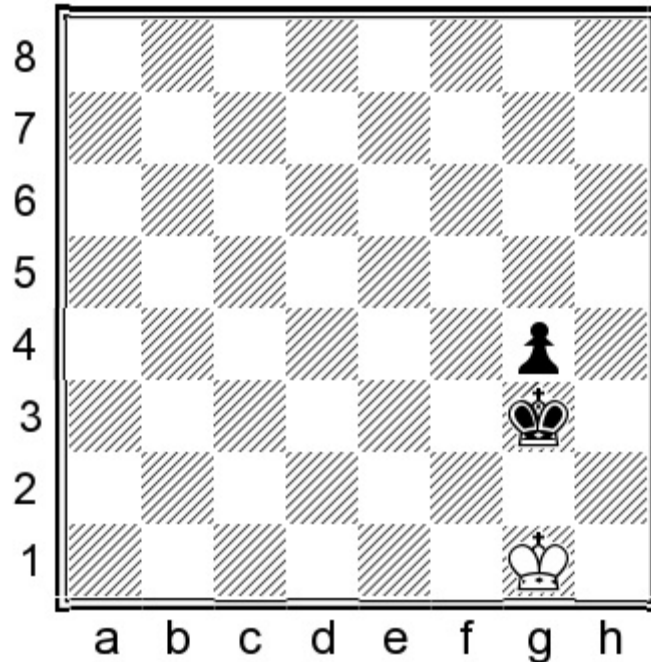
Black missed this transformation of the advantage! He sacrifices a pawn to penetrate with his king.

63.♔xf2 ♕d3 64.♔f1 ♕e3 65.♔g2 ♕e2 66.♔g1 ♕f3 67.♔h2 ♕f2



Position after: 67... ♔f2

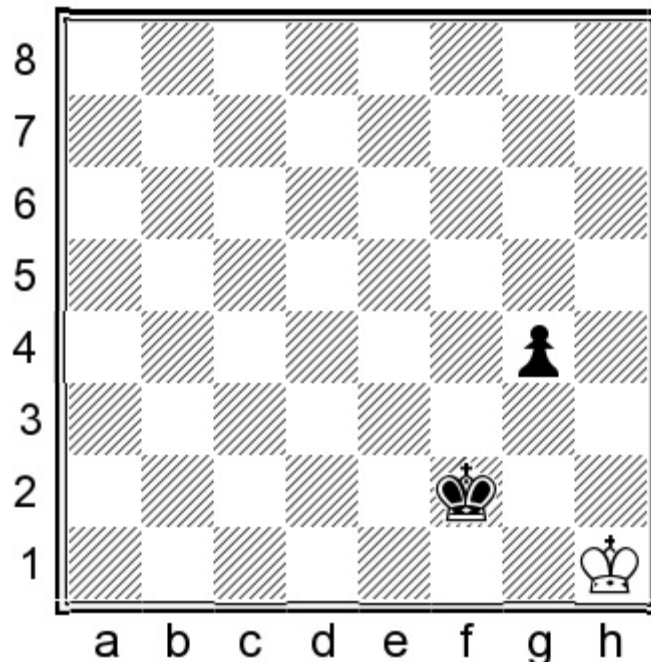
It's important to remember that if you can win the pawn on the third rank then that is always winning, you do not have to calculate any further. If we move this position a few ranks up the board it would be a draw because White could seize the opposition. 68. ♔h1 ♔xg3 69. ♔g1



Position after: 69. ♔g1

A) 69... ♔h3! Because of the stalemate possibilities, it is important to push the white king towards the middle of the board, not the corner. 70. ♔h1 g3 71. ♔g1 g2 72. ♔f2 ♔h2 Black will queen his pawn.

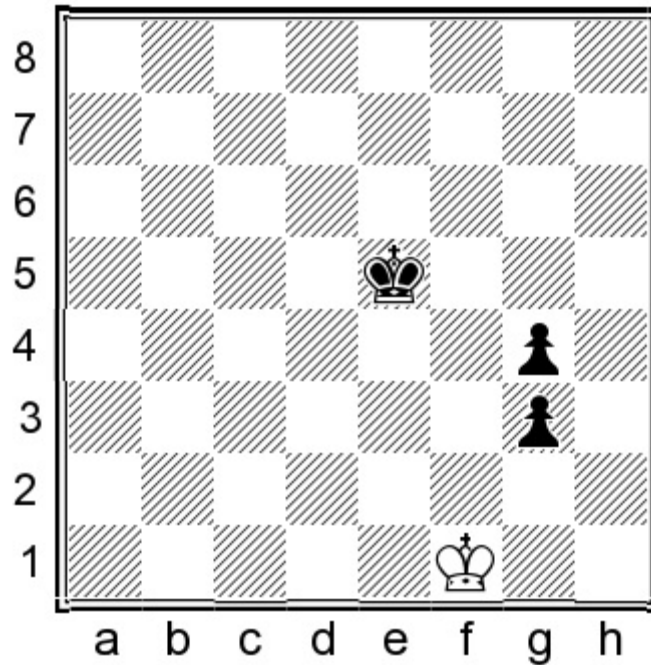
B) Worse is 69... ♔f3? due to 70. ♔h2 ♔f2 [70...g3+?? draws because of 71. ♔h1!] 71. ♔h1



Position after: 71. ♔h1

And now for Black it's best to get back to the right path with 71... ♕g3! 72. ♕g1 ♖h3!.

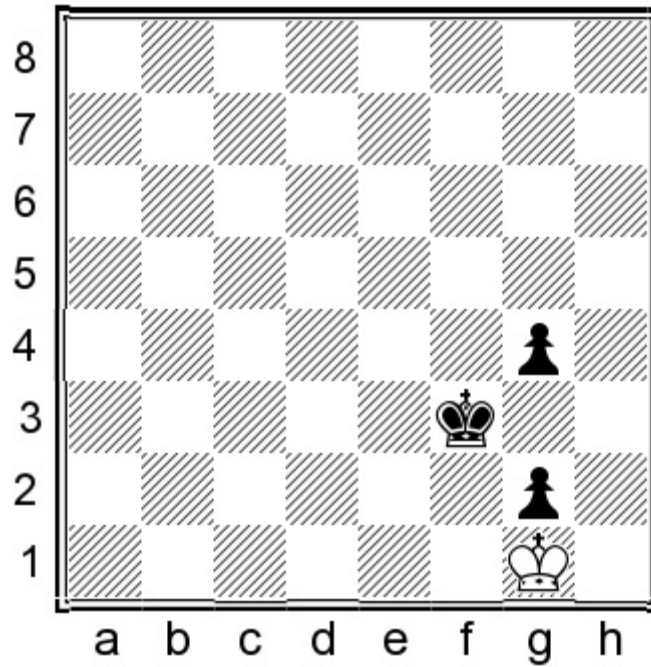
61. ♕f1!



Position after: 61. ♕f1!

Now the position is a draw!

61... ♕e4 62. ♕g2 ♖f4 63. ♕g1 ♖g5 64. ♕g2 ♖h4 65. ♕g1 ♖g5 66. ♕g2 ♖f4 67. ♕g1 ♖f3 68. ♕f1 g2+ 69. ♕g1



Position after: 69. ♔g1

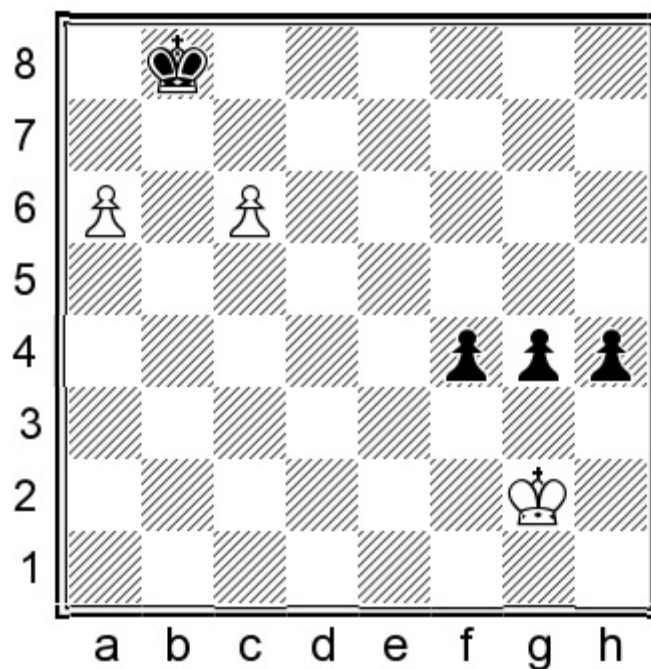
69... ♕f4 70. ♕xg2 g3 71. ♔g1 ♕g4 72. ♔g2 ♕h4 73. ♔g1 ♕h3 74. ♕h1 g2+ 75. ♔g1 ♕g3

1/2-1/2

Example 2

Electrical pawns

Study by J. Behting, 1911

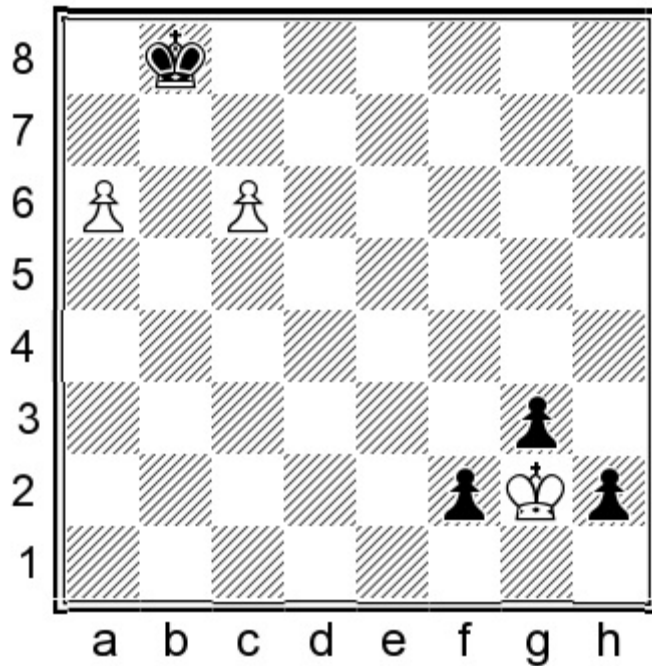


This example is well-known, but it's good to repeat it. The black king cannot move because if it attacks

one of the white pawns, the other pawn advances to the promotion square. Such pawns are called “electrical pawns”. But how can White stop Black’s army? The solution is

1.♔g1!!

A) All other moves fail, for example 1.♔f2 h3 2.♔g1 g3 3.♔f1 f3 4.♔g1 f2+ 5.♔f1 h2 6.♔g2

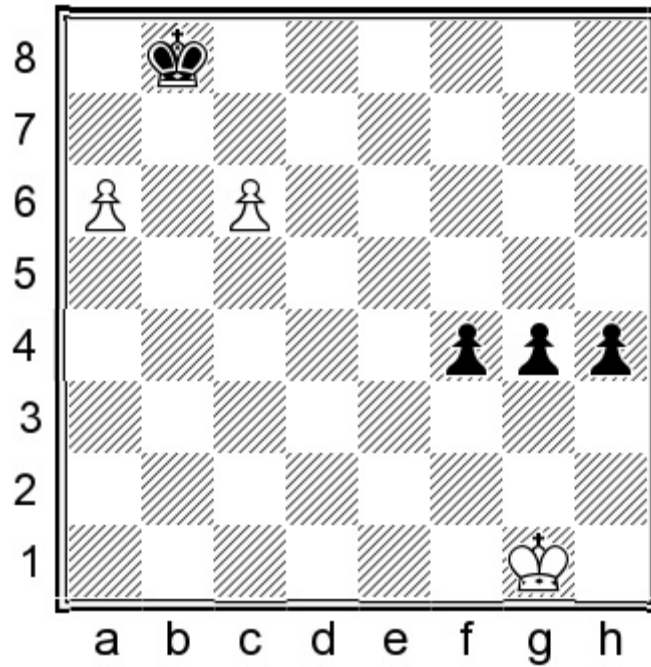


Position after: 6.♔g2

6...h1=♚+ 7.♔xh1 f1=♚#

B) Analogous is 1.♔h2 f3 2.♔g1 g3 3.♔f1 h3--.

1.♔g1!!



Position after: 1. ♔g1!!

But now White is ready for the advance of the black pawns. Whichever pawn moves, the white king moves in front of it!

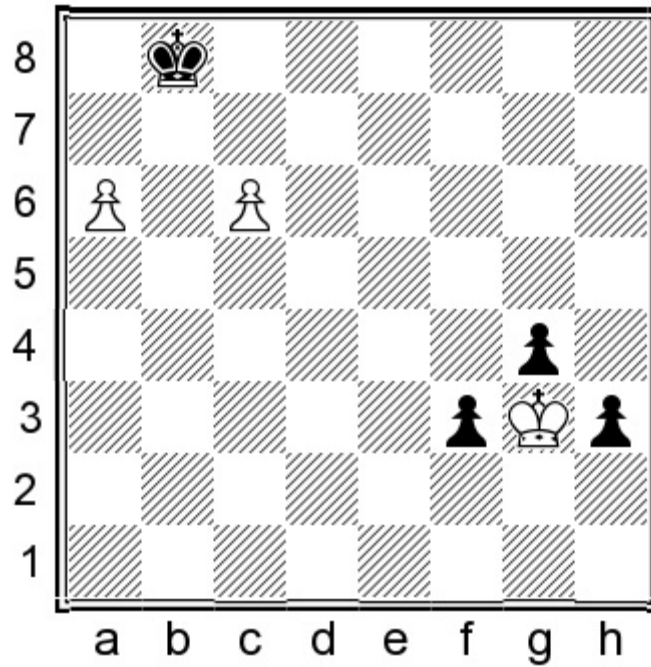
1...f3

A) 1...♔a7 2.c7+-

B) 1...g3 2.♔g2+-

C) 1...h3 2.♔h2+-

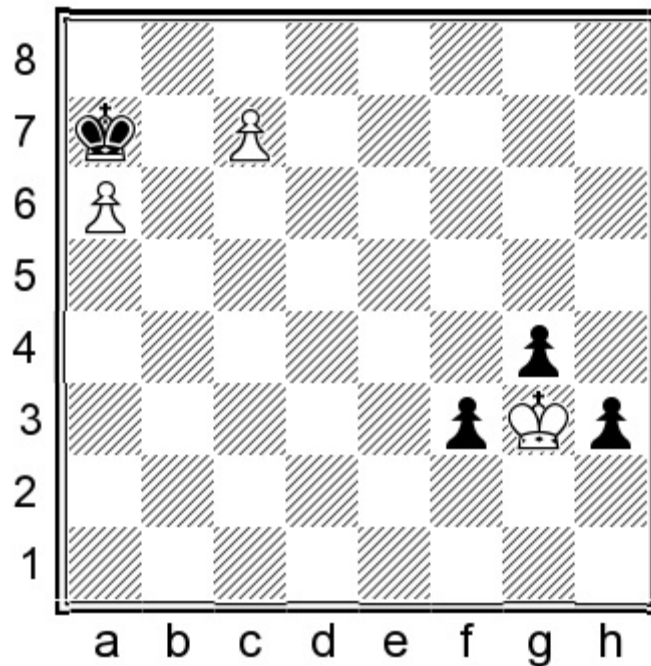
2.♔f2! h3 3.♔g3



Position after: 3. ♔g3

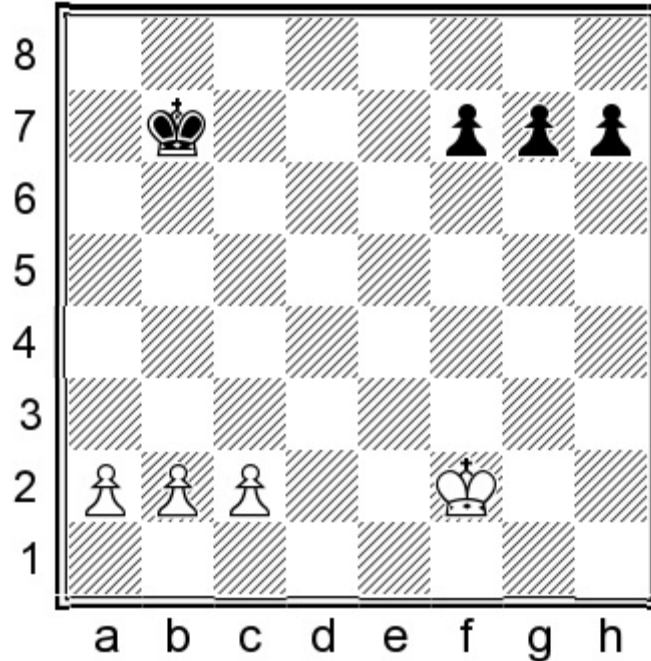
White has successfully blocked the black pawns and now the white pawns decide because the black king must move! It's zugzwang; the side that moves, loses.

3...♔a7 4.c7 1-0



Position after: 4.c7

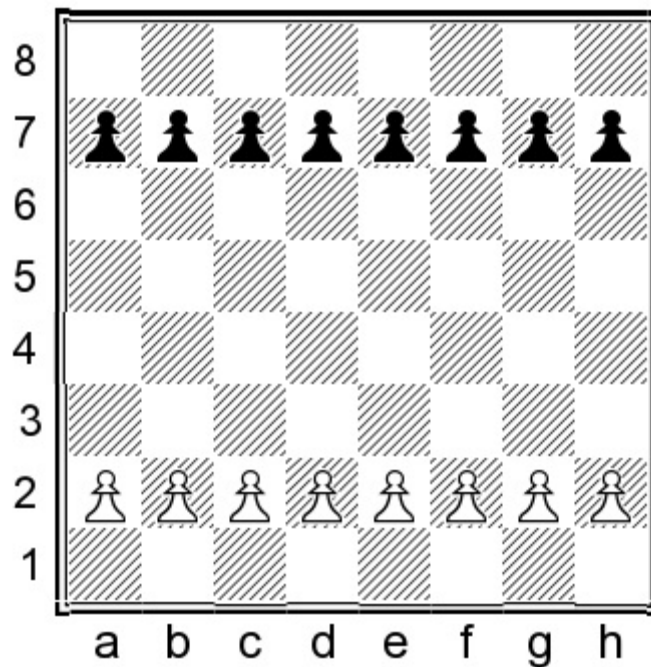
Example 3



If you know about this way of blocking the pawns, that will be useful in playing out this example. I suggest that you ask another player to try to play this position with White on the move. I am convinced that since you know the previous example you will win with both the white and black pieces!

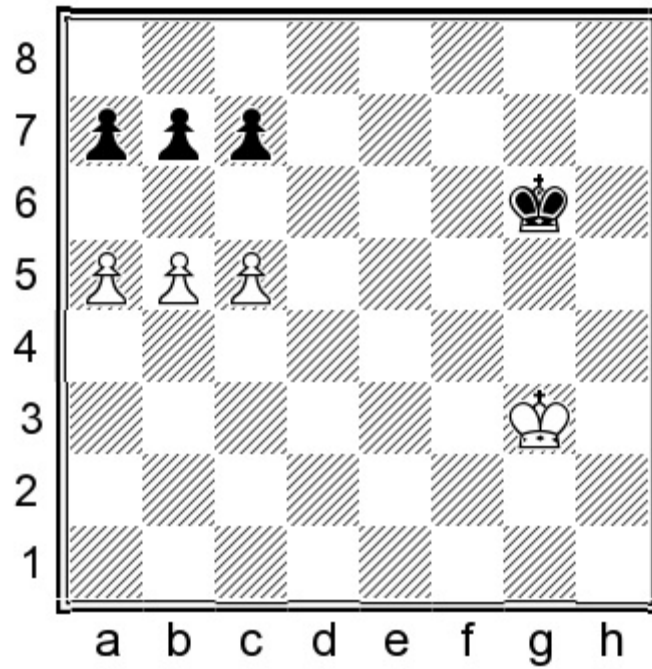
Example 4

Pawn endgame without kings



I would also advise you to get deeper into pawn breaks, to try to play positions without pieces such as this one. The winner is the one who queens a pawn first!

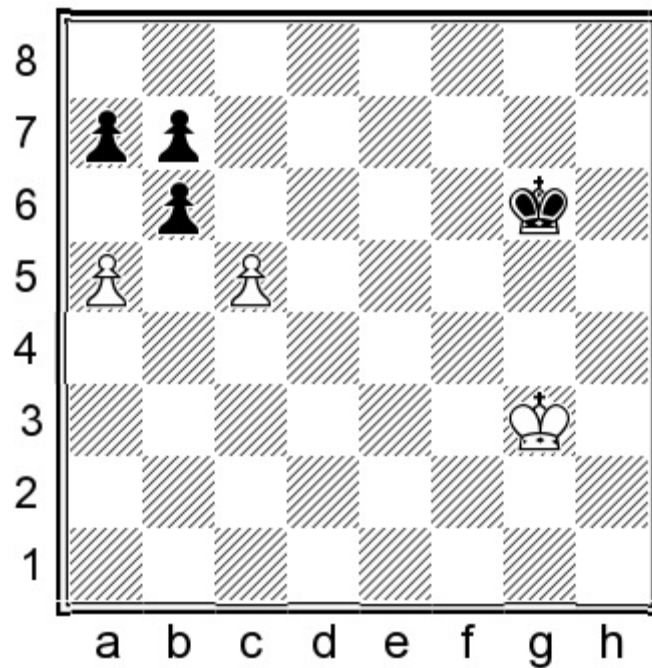
Example 5
Pawn break



To play such games you need to know the basic break, which is this one. White on the move wins after

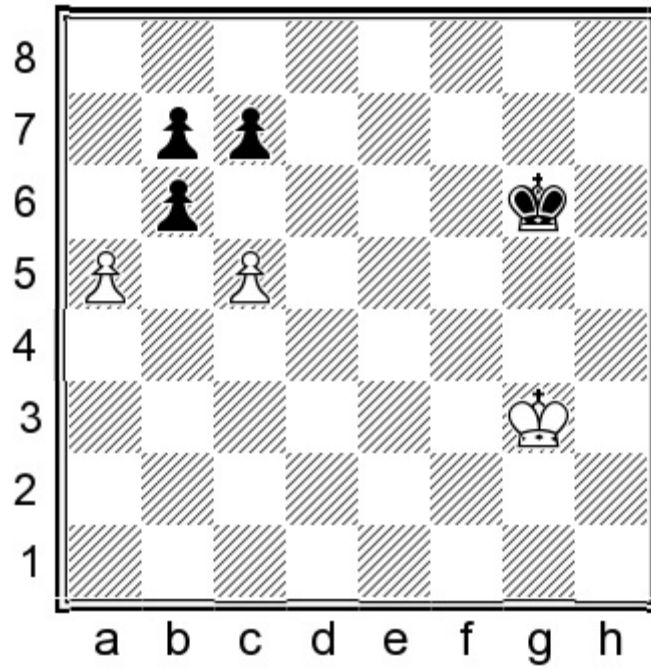
1.b6 axb6

The other capture is similar: 1...cxb6



Position after: 1...cxb6

2.a6! bxa6 3.c6 ♔f6 4.c7.



Position after: 1...axb6

2.c6! bxc6 3.a6

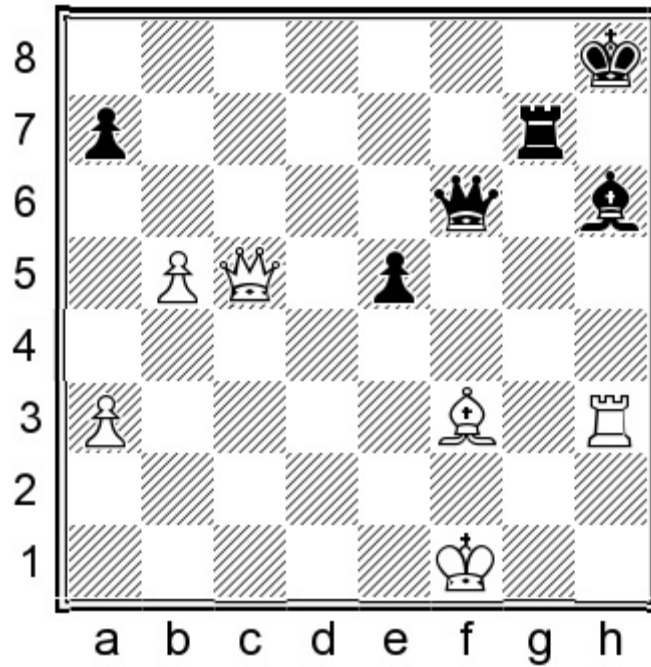
And the white pawn quickly promotes.

1-0

Example 6

From Atabayev – Bosiocic

Doha 2016

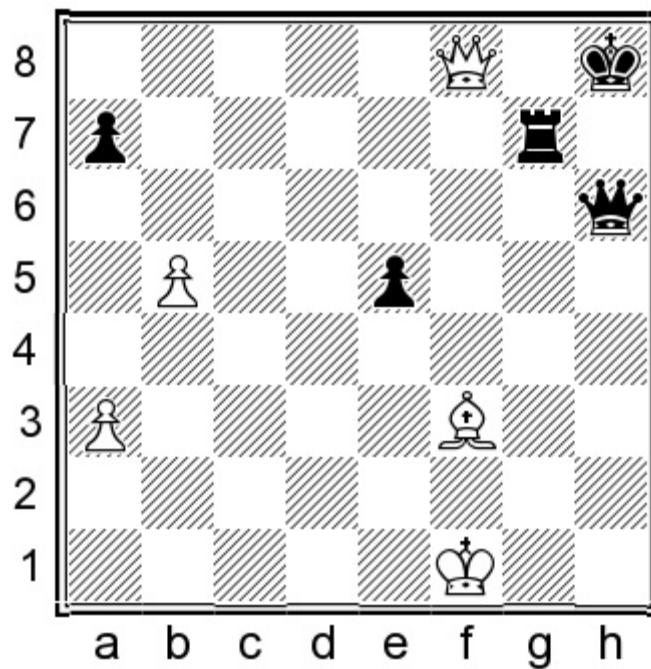


In this game, the players had little time on the clock since it was a blitz game. White missed the winning idea.

45. ♖xh6+!!

45. ♔c6? was played and the game ended in a draw.

45... ♕xh6 46. ♕f8+!

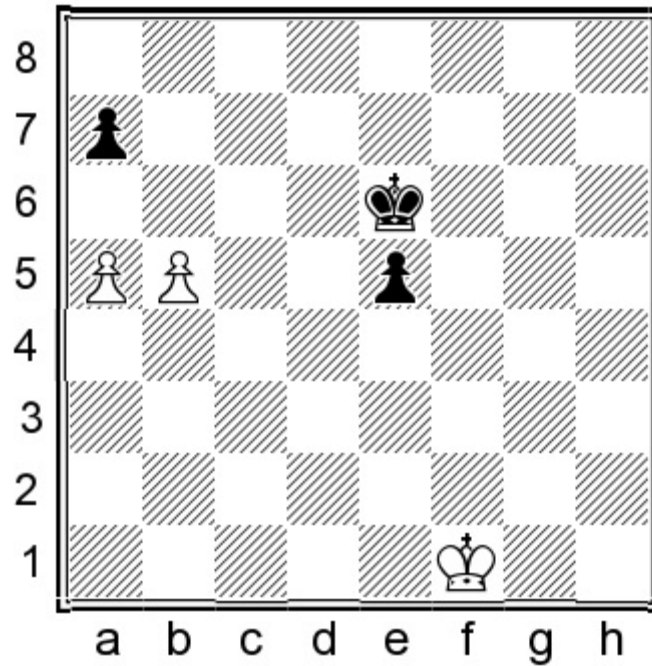


Position after: 46. ♕f8+!

46...♔h7

Black can't play 46...♖g8 because of 47.♙xh6#.

47.♕e4+ ♖g6 48.♙xh6+ ♔xh6 49.♕xg6 ♔xg6 50.a4! ♔f6 51.a5 ♔e6

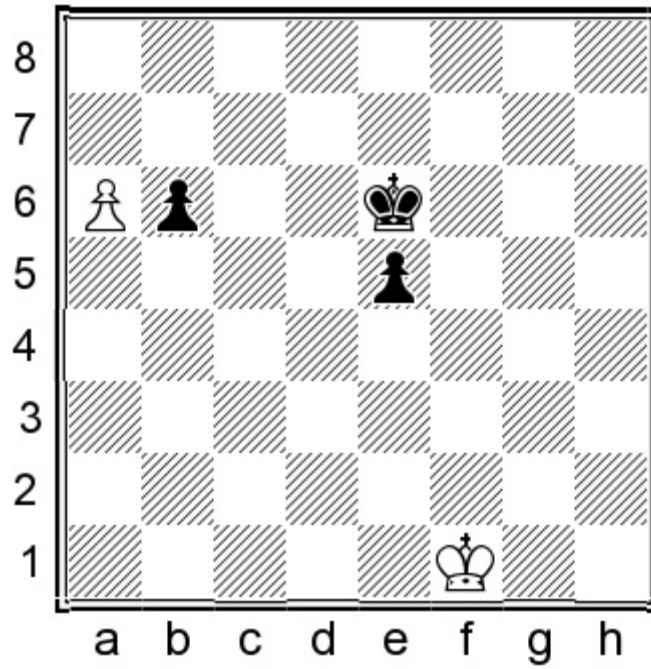


Position after: 51...♔e6

52.b6!! axb6

52...a6 53.b7

53.a6!



Position after: 53.a6!

53...♔d6 54.a7

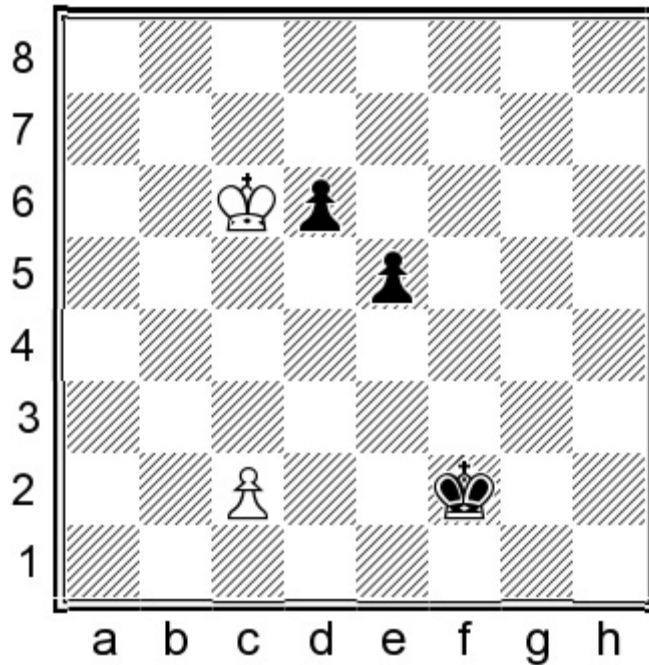
And the white pawn is unstoppable!

1-0

Example 7

Pawn endgame

Study by J. Moravec, 1950

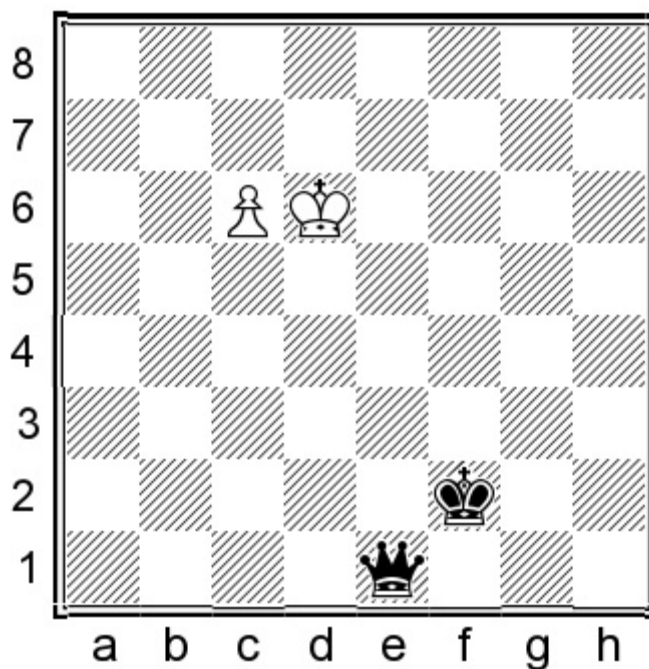


Pawn endgames can be very complicated since after pawns promote it is possible to transpose to a queen endgame. This example is very good for practicing calculation and developing ideas because there are not so many opportunities and one needs to be creative.

1.♔d5!!

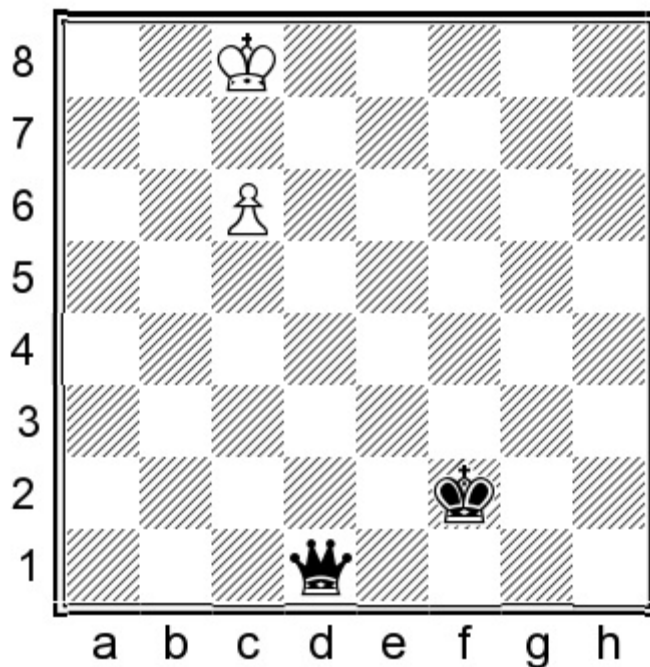
You can come to this move when you discover the problem with the move 1.♔xd6?.

What happens if White takes the pawn? 1.♔xd6 e4 2.c4 e3 3.c5 e2 4.c6 e1=♚



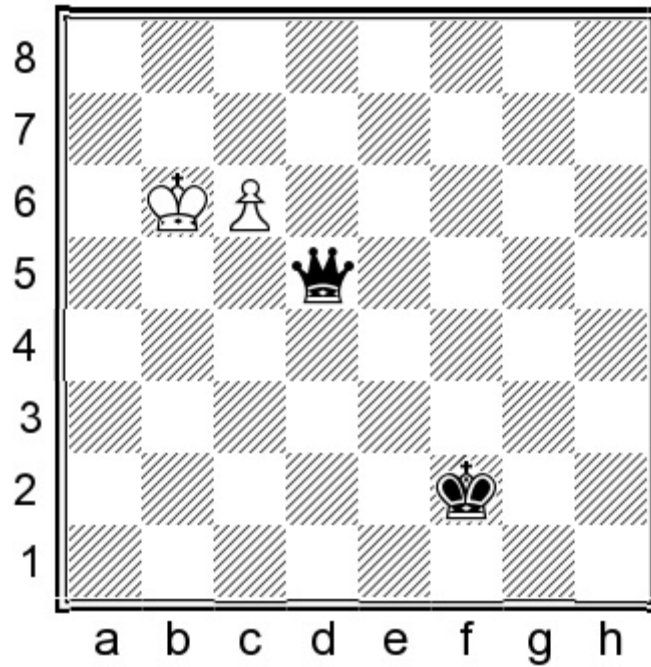
Position after: 4...e1=♚

Now after 5.♔d7 Black needs to be accurate, because if White were now on the move, the game would be drawn. A pawn on the a- or c-file (and the analogous f- and h-files) against a queen is a draw due to the stalemate motif, so Black must prevent the pawn from moving! [It's similar in case of 5.♔c7 ♚e4 6.♔d7 ♚d5+ 7.♔c7 ♔e3 8.♔b7 ♔d4; 5.c7 loses even faster, on account of 5...♚e8! And as soon as the queen gets in front of the pawn White is helpless.] 5...♚d1+! [5...♚d2+ 6.♔c8 Now there is no check, so the pawn can reach the seventh rank] 6.♔c8



Position after: 6.♔c8

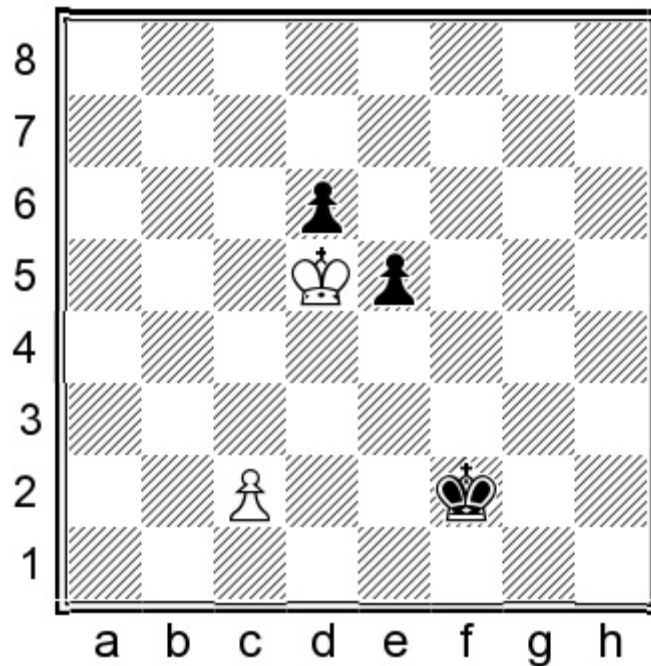
6...♚g4+! This is the point of the previous check: Now White cannot carry out his idea. 7.♔b8 ♚b4+ 8.♔a7 ♚c5+ 9.♔b7 ♚d5 10.♔b6



Position after: 10. ♔b6

And now, in fact, White doesn't have a threat so Black can come closer with his king. 10...♔e3 11.c7 ♔a8 and again the black queen will get in front of the pawn!

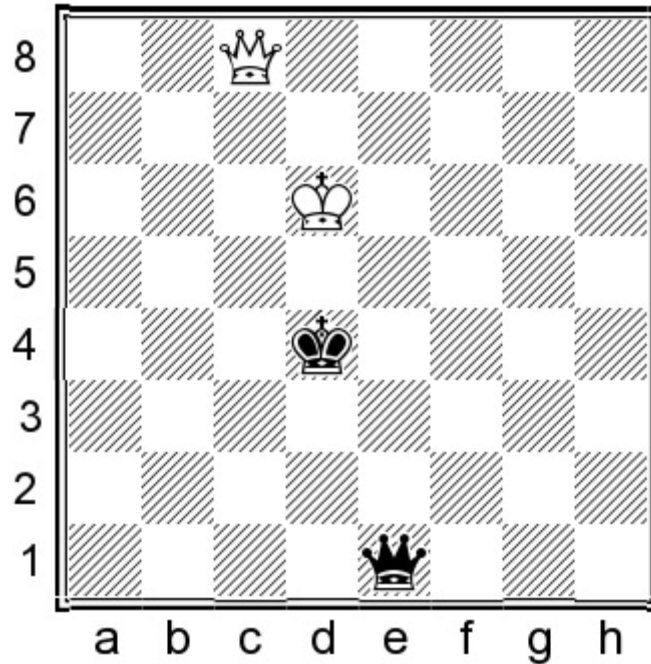
1. ♔d5!!



Position after: 1. ♔d5!!

1...♔f3

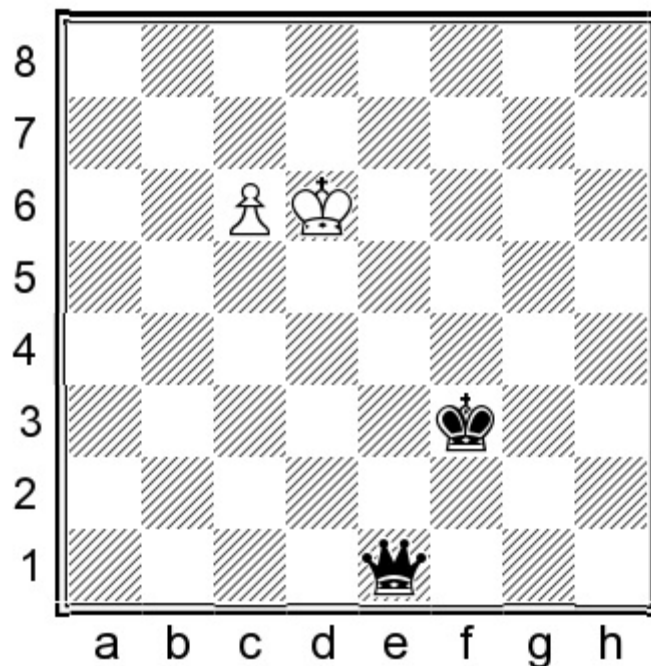
If Black plays 1...♔e3 in order to prepare the move ...e4, the king on the e-file interferes with the progress of his pawn. So now White can enter the same position by taking 2.♔xd6 and he will be a tempo up! 2...e4 3.c4 ♔d4 4.c5 e3 5.c6 e2 6.c7 e1=♚ 7.c8=♚



Position after: 7.c8=♚

And it's a draw.

2.♔xd6 e4 3.c4 e3 4.c5 e2 5.c6 e1=♚



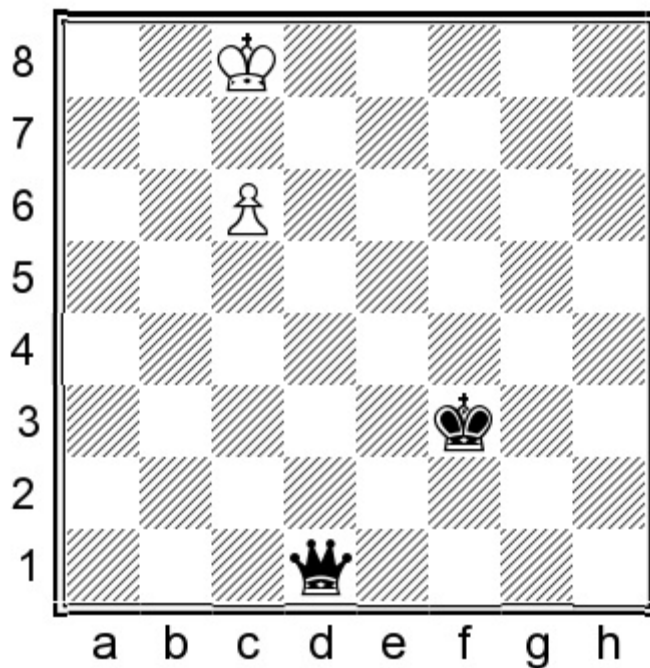
Position after: 5...e1=♚

And it seems that nothing has changed but then follows

6.♔d7!

and after

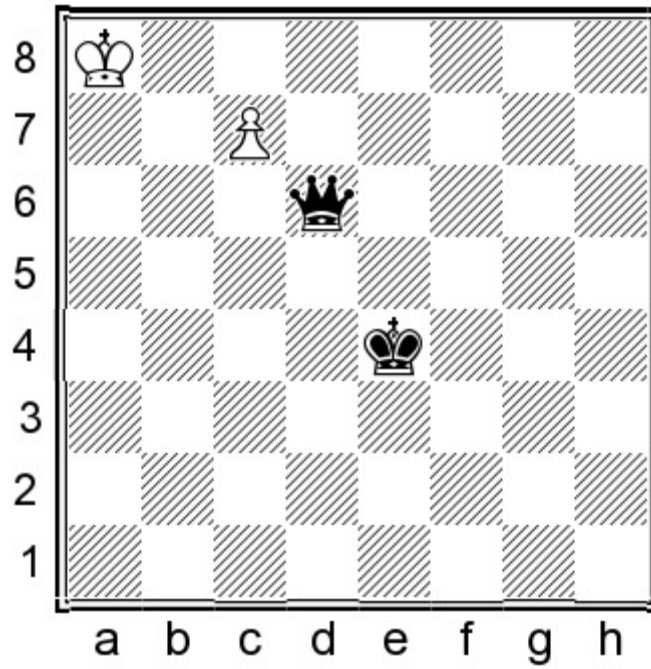
6...♚d1+ 7.♔c8!



Position after: 7.♔c8!

Black has no check on g4! This is the idea behind 1.♔d5.

7...♚d5 8.c7 ♔e4 9.♔b8 ♚d6 10.♔a8!



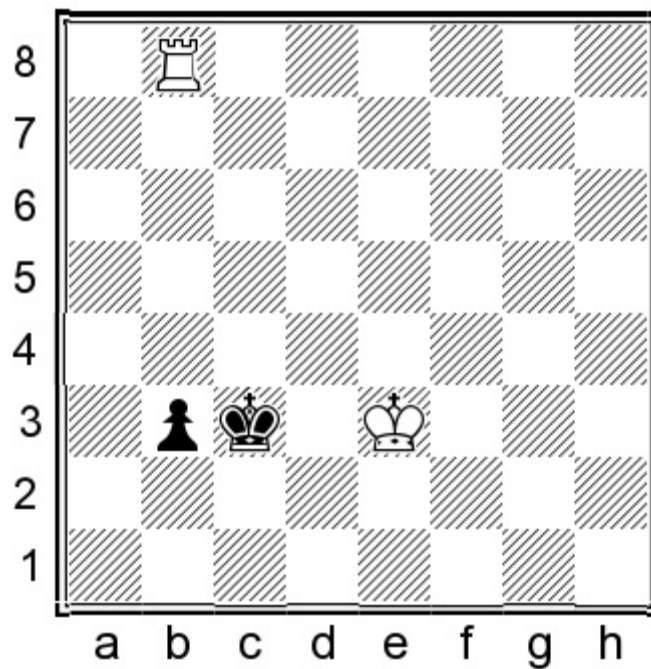
Position after: 10. ♔a8!

10... ♚c6+ 11. ♔b8 ♚b6+ 12. ♔a8!

And thanks to the stalemate trick White secures the draw!

1/2-1/2

Example 8
Rook versus pawn

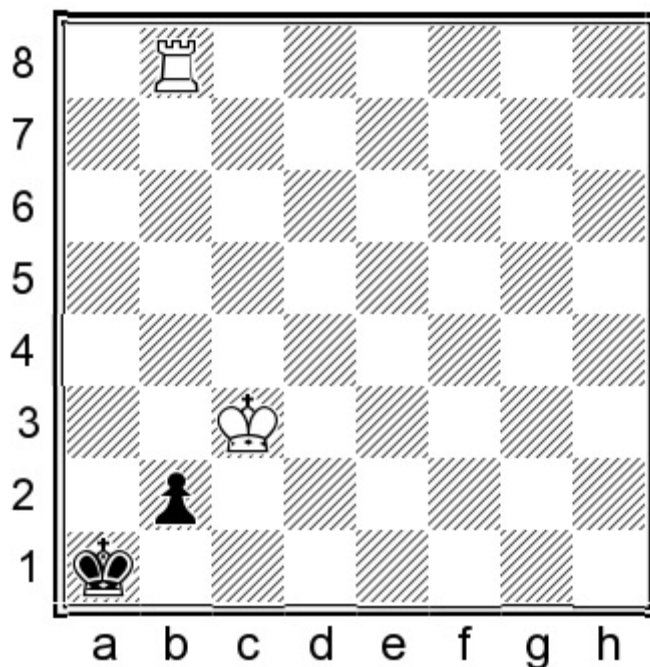


In the fight of rook versus pawn, it is important that you know about this position (the white rook can be on any file) with the pawn and both kings on the third rank, and the kings in opposition. It doesn't matter which file the pawn is on. If it is White to move, he wins and if it is Black to move, he draws. It is also important that you know that Black should use shouldering, i.e. trying to block the white king from approaching the pawn. That makes it harder for the side with the rook to win.

1. ♖c8+ ♔b2

1... ♕b4 2. ♔d2 ♕a3 3. ♔c3 and the pawn falls.

2. ♕d2 ♕a2 3. ♕c3 ♖b2 4. ♖a8+ ♕b1 5. ♖b8 ♕a1



Position after: 5... ♔a1

6. ♔c2

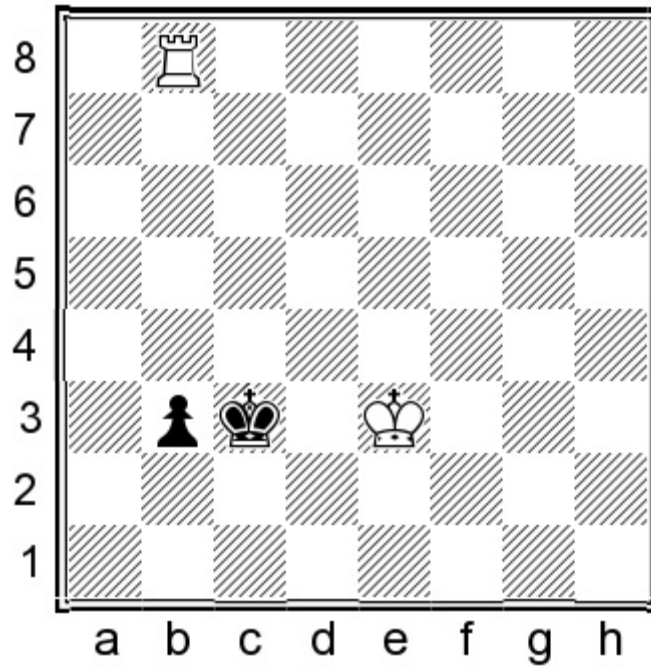
Of course not 6. ♖xb2?? stalemate.

6... ♕a2 7. ♖xb2+

1-0

Example 9

Rook versus pawn (I)



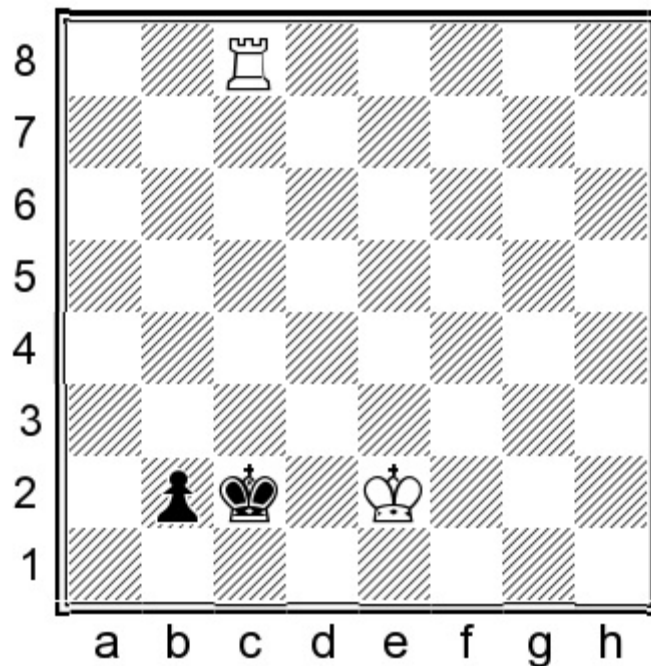
With Black on the move the position is drawn.

1...♔c2!

1...b2! also works here.

2.♖c8+

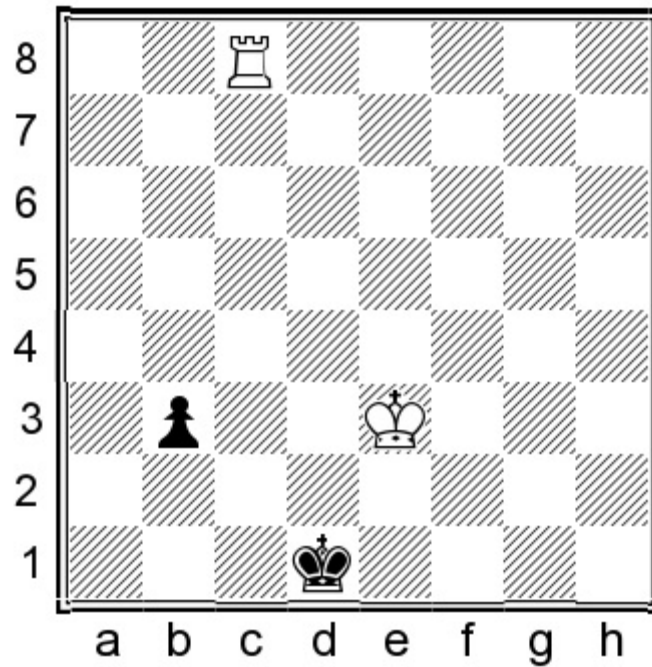
2.♔e2 b2 3.♖c8+



Position after: 3.♖c8+

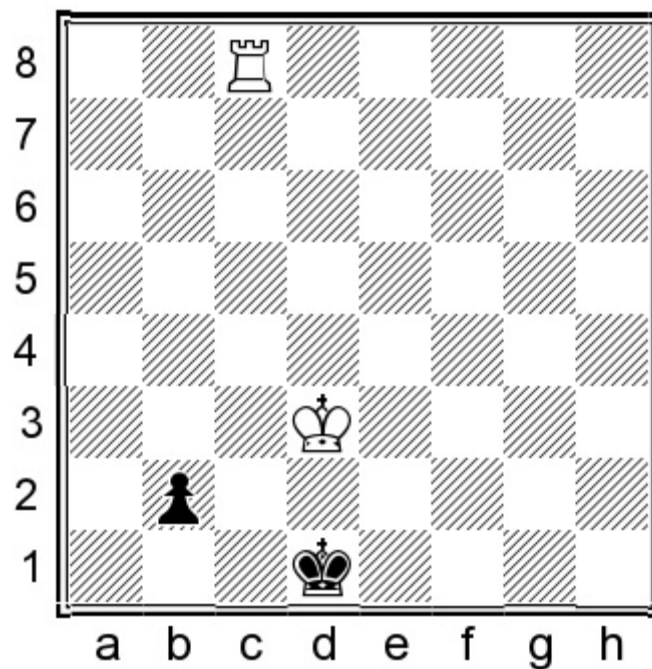
3...♔b3! [3...♔b1? Never go in front of the pawn! 4.♔d2 And White wins.]

2...♔d1!



Position after: 2...♔d1!

3.♔d3 ♔b2 4.♖b8 ♔c1 5.♖c8+ ♔d1



Position after: 5...♔d1

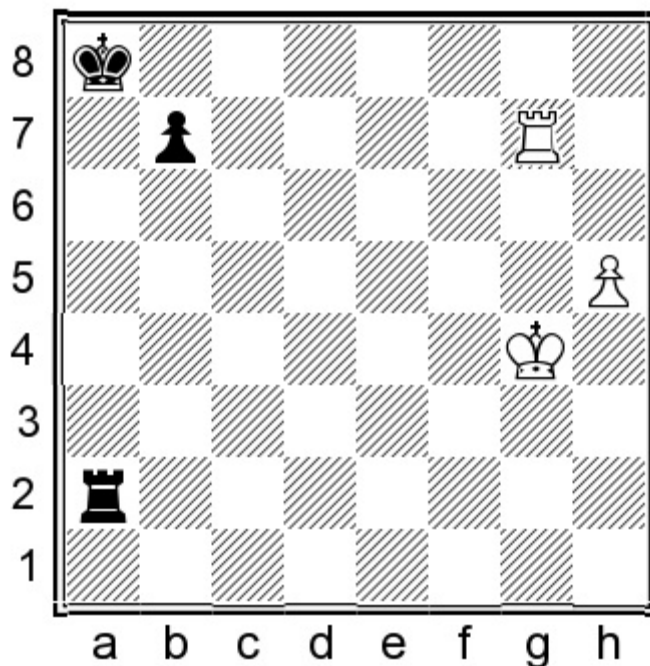
It's a draw.

1/2-1/2

Example 10

Rook versus pawn (II)

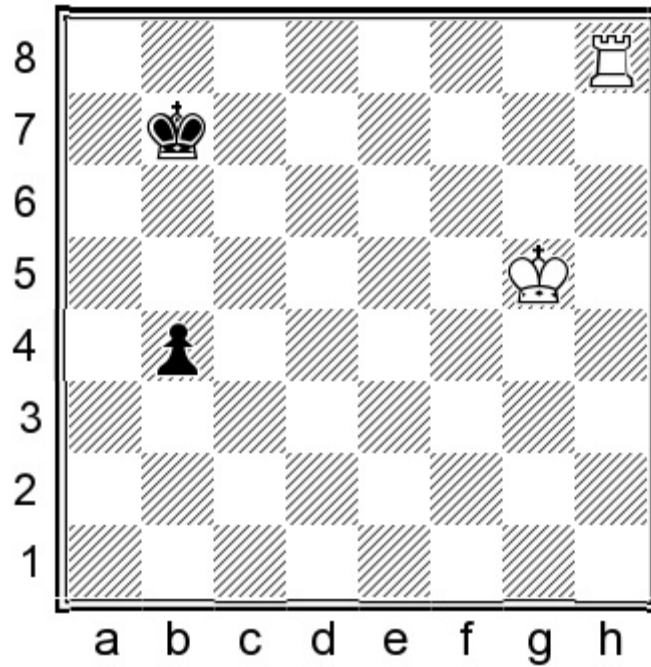
From Sipos – Stankovic, Hungary 2017



Now that you know what's going on with positions of rook against pawn it will be much easier for you to deal with more complicated positions. The diagram shows one such position. White has the more dangerous pawn and it looks like Black will have to sacrifice his rook for the h-pawn, after which a position of pawn against rook will arise.

46.h6 ♖h2 47.♔g5 ♔a7

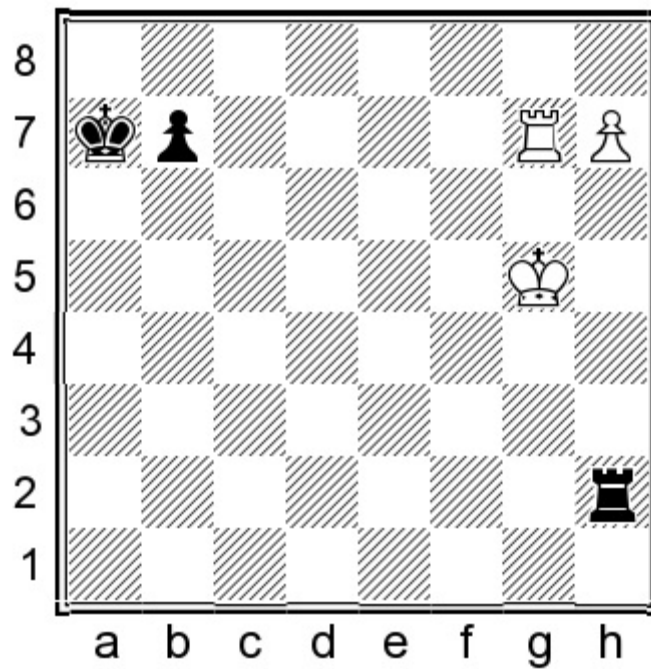
47...b5 48.h7 b4 49.♖g8+ ♔b7 50.h8=♙ ♖xh8 51.♖xh8



Position after: 51. ♖xh8

51...♔c6 52.♔f4 ♔c5 53.♔e3 ♔c4 And Black has neither his pawn nor his king on the third rank.

48.h7



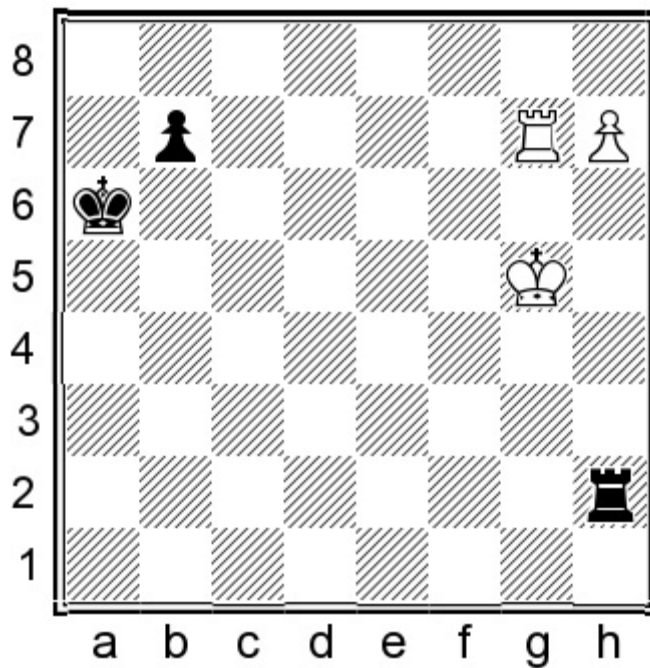
Position after: 48.h7

48...♖g2+!

Black correctly drives the white king away so that it will take more time to get back when the rook vs.

pawn endgame arises.

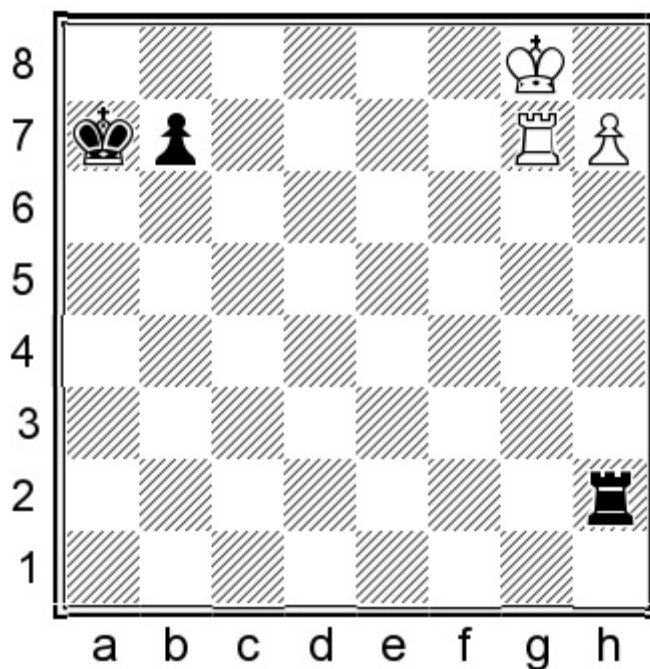
48...♔a6



Position after: 48...♔a6

49.♟g6+! ♔a5 50.♞h6! Building the so-called “bridge” is another motif in rook endgames. That’s why Black’s king here must not cross the sixth rank.

49.♔h6 ♟h2+ 50.♔g6 ♟g2+ 51.♔f7 ♞h2 52.♔g8

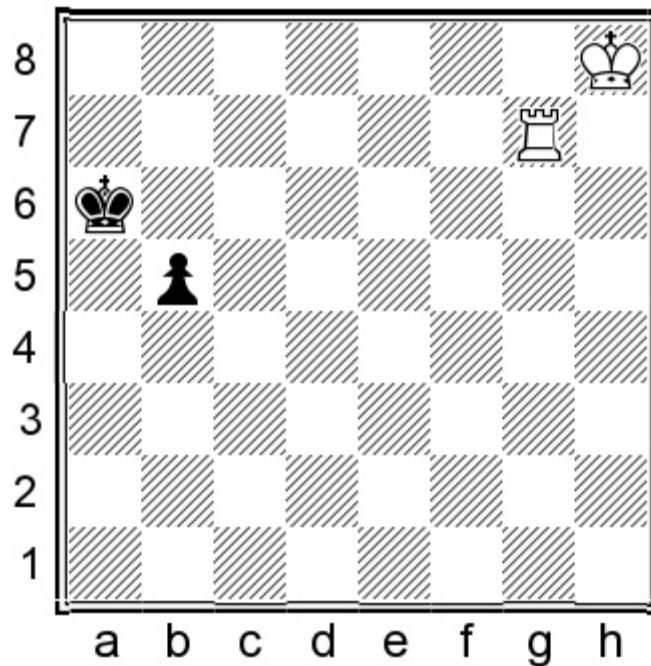


Position after: 52. ♔g8

52... ♔a6

Now there is no longer any threat to build the bridge, so Black's king can go to the sixth rank.

53. h8=♚ ♖xh8+ 54. ♔xh8 b5

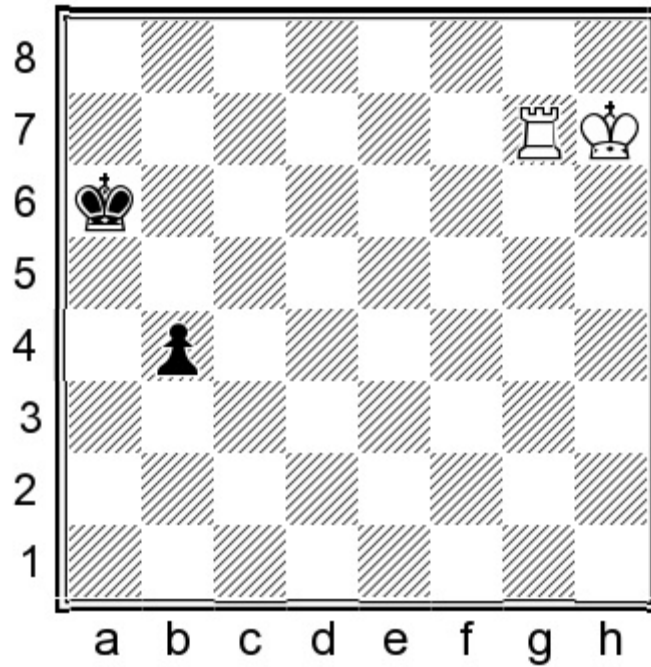


Position after: 54...b5

55. ♖g5?

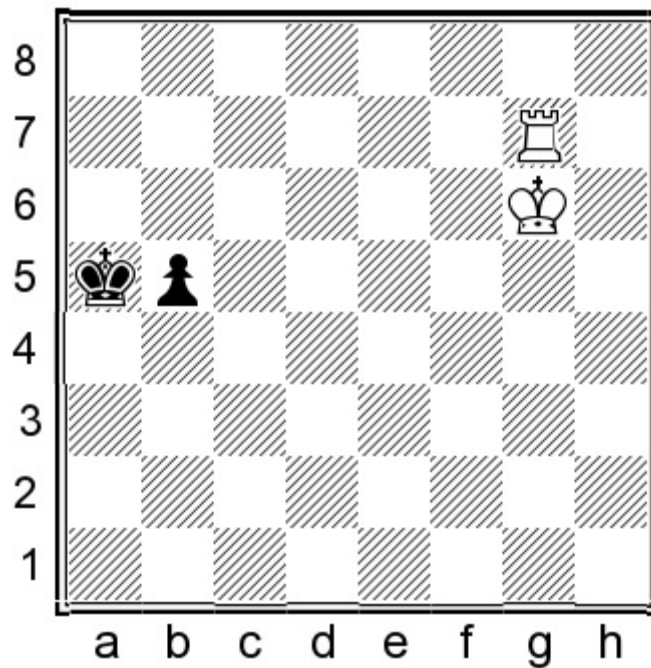
A mistake that goes unpunished!

The correct idea was to move the king right away to the position you have just learned. 55. ♔h7! ♔a5 [55...b4



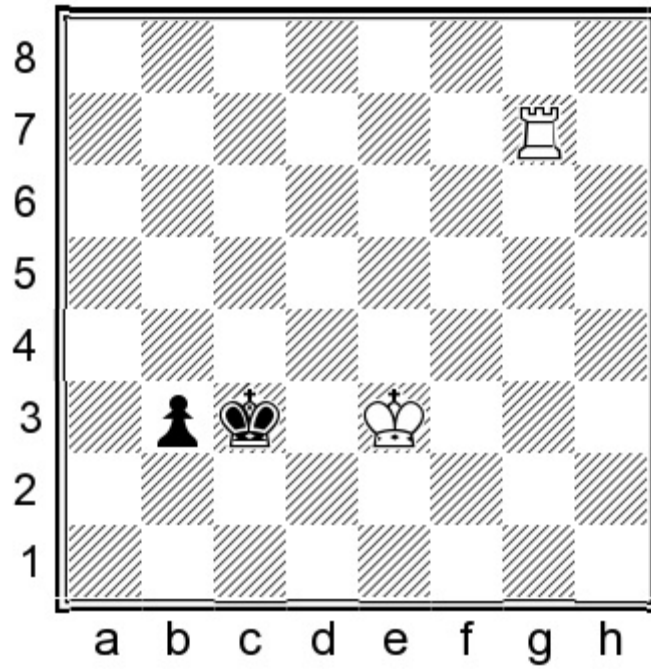
Position after: 55...b4

56.♖g5! This is also an important motif in rook vs. pawn positions. Cutting the king off along the fifth rank wins because the king cannot move forward and if the pawn advances it will be lost. 56...b3 57.♖g3! b2 58.♖b3] 56.♔g6



Position after: 56.♔g6

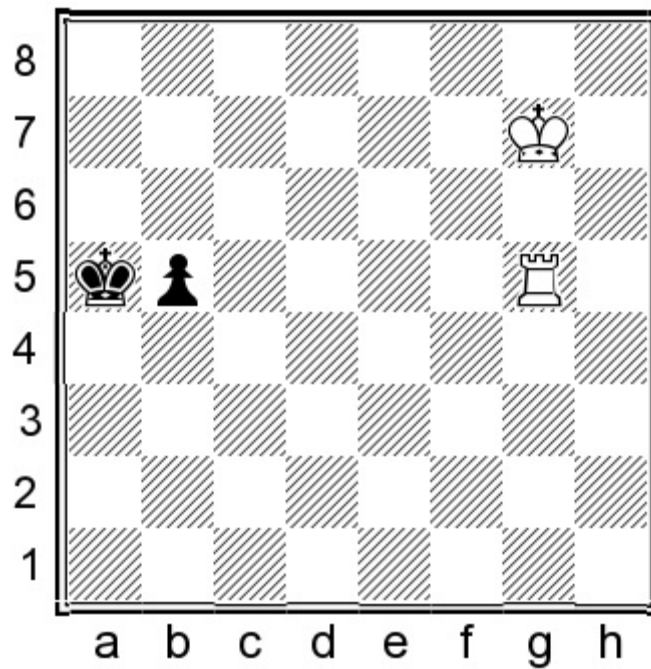
56...♔b4! Shouldering, but White is on time! [56...b4 57.♔f5 b3 58.♔e4 ♔a4 59.♔d3 ♔a3 60.♔c3 and wins] 57.♔f5 ♔c3 58.♔e4 b4 59.♔e3 b3



Position after: 59...b3

White is on the move which means he is winning! 60.♖c7+!

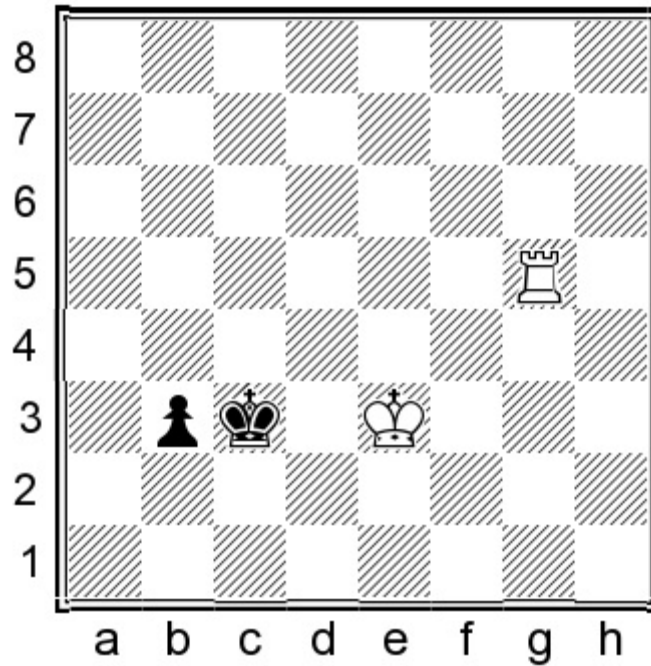
55...♔a5 56.♔g7



Position after: 56.♔g7

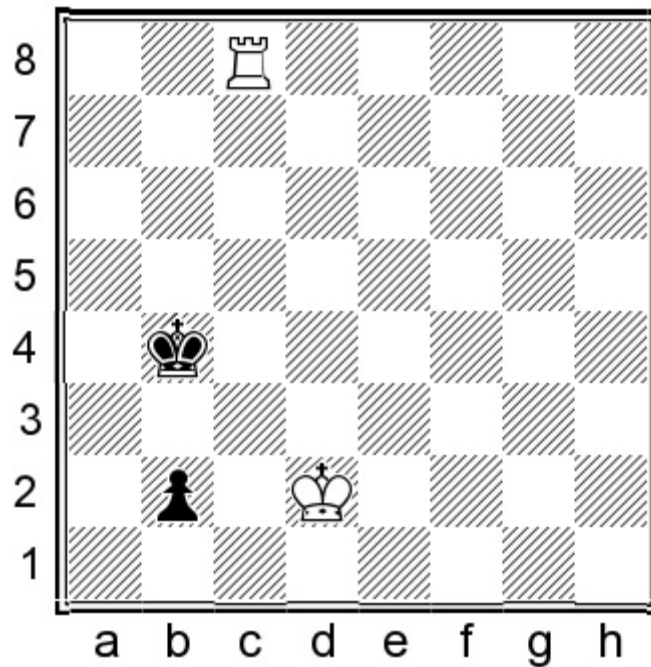
56...♔a4?

Shouldering was the way to go. 56...♔b4! 57.♕f6 ♖c4 58.♕e5 b4 59.♕e4 b3 60.♕e3 ♖c3



Position after: 60...♕c3

It is White's move but his rook is poorly placed. His rook should be somewhere from the sixth to the eighth rank order to have enough space so that Black cannot attack it after checks. 61.♖c5+ ♕b4!
 [Never in front of the pawn! 61...♕b2 62.♕d2 And White wins.] 62.♖c8 b2 63.♕d2



Position after: 63.♕d2

63...b1=♗+! 64.♕d3 ♗a3 And this position you can see further on in the book.

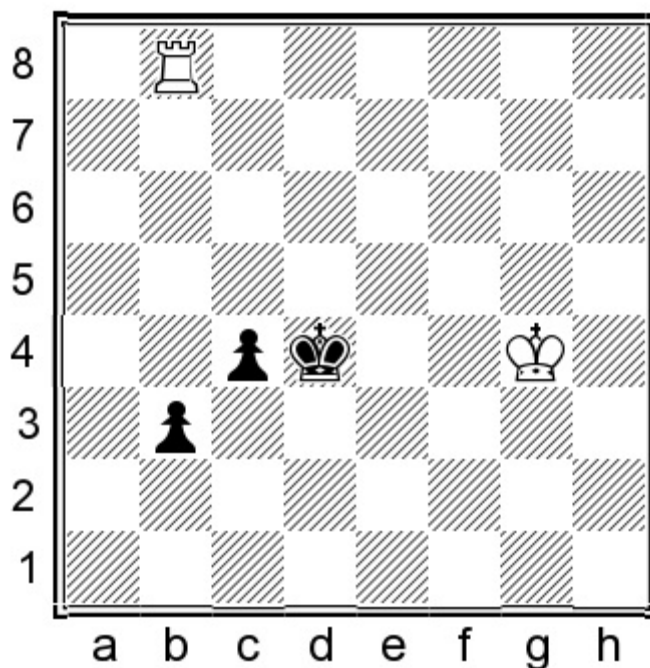
57.♔f6 b4 58.♔e5 b3 59.♔d4 b2 60.♟g1 ♔b3 61.♔d3 ♔a2 62.♔c2 ♔a3 63.♔b1 ♔b3 64.♟g3+

The pawn is falling.

1-0

Example 11

Rook versus two pawns

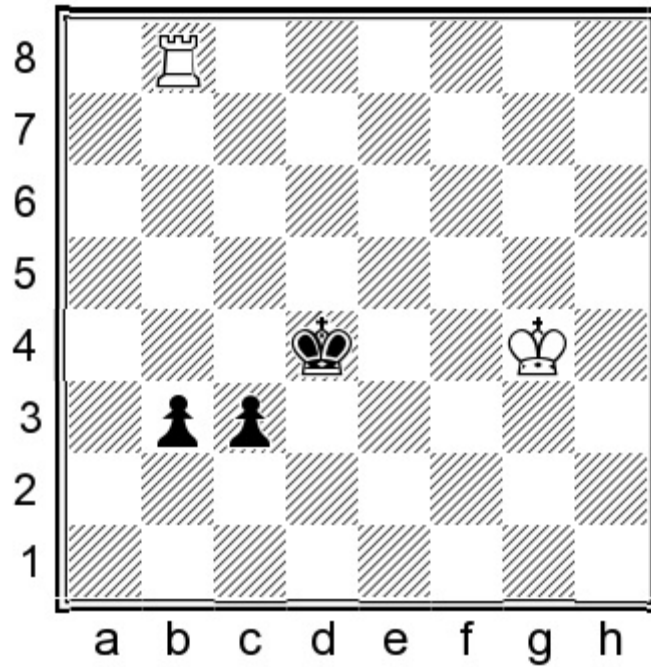


Rook against two pawns is a more complicated task, but here too, if you are the side with a rook you don't need to panic. It's not easy for your opponent to start rolling his pawns!

1...♔c3

In general, in the position with two pawns against a rook, the rule is that the king should come to help the advanced pawn in order to push his backward pawn. Here the white king is close enough so that he can save himself, however if it was a bit further away Black would have won.

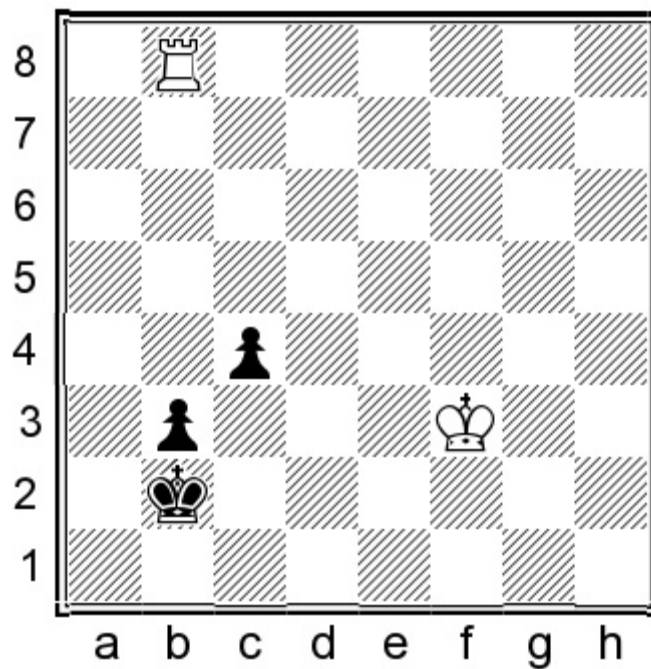
A very tempting move is 1...c3 since if White takes the pawn he loses.



Position after: 1...c3

But as you learned from my candidate moves list, every check is to be considered. 2.♖b4+! [the aforementioned capture 2.♖xb3 loses to 2...c2 3.♖b4+ ♔d5 4.♖b5+ ♔c6!] 2...♔d3 [2...♔c5 3.♖xb3 and the remaining pawn can't go any further] 3.♖xb3 And White is on time to sacrifice his rook for the pawn.

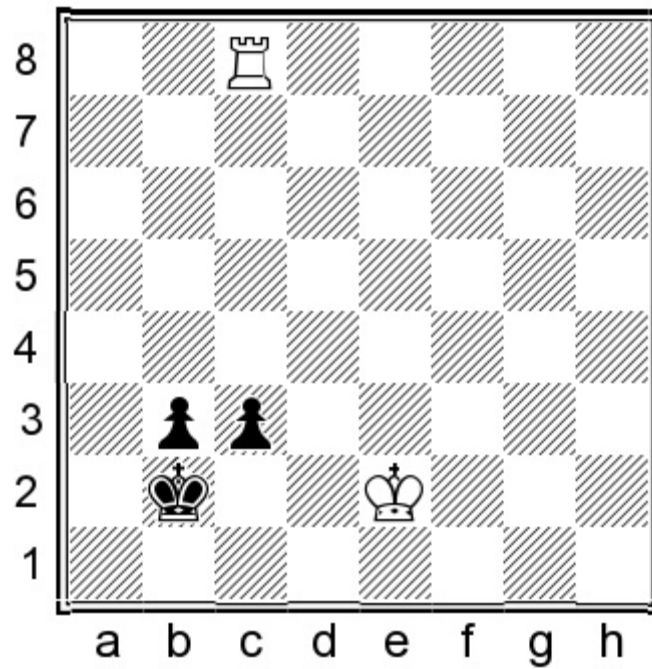
1...♔c3 2.♔f3 ♔b2



Position after: 2...♔b2

3.♔e3!

A very important move! White should keep the option of attacking the c-pawn from behind with his king. The seemingly similar 3.♔e2? loses after 3...c3 4.♖c8



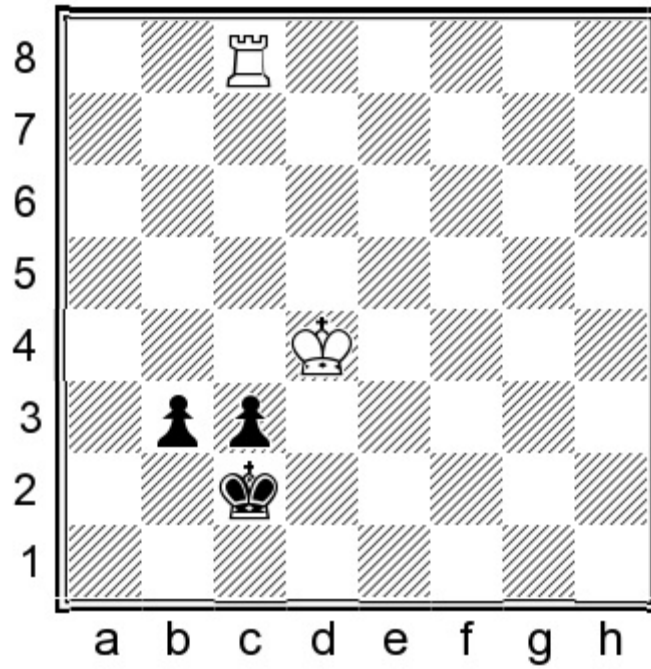
Position after: 4.♖c8

4...♔c2! And the b-pawn starts to roll.

3...c3 4.♖c8 ♔c2

4...c2 5.♔d2 ♔b1 6.♖c7! Black can't make any progress.

5.♔d4!



Position after: 5. ♔d4!

5...b2 6. ♖xc3+

And Black cannot queen his pawn.

6...♔d2 7. ♖b3

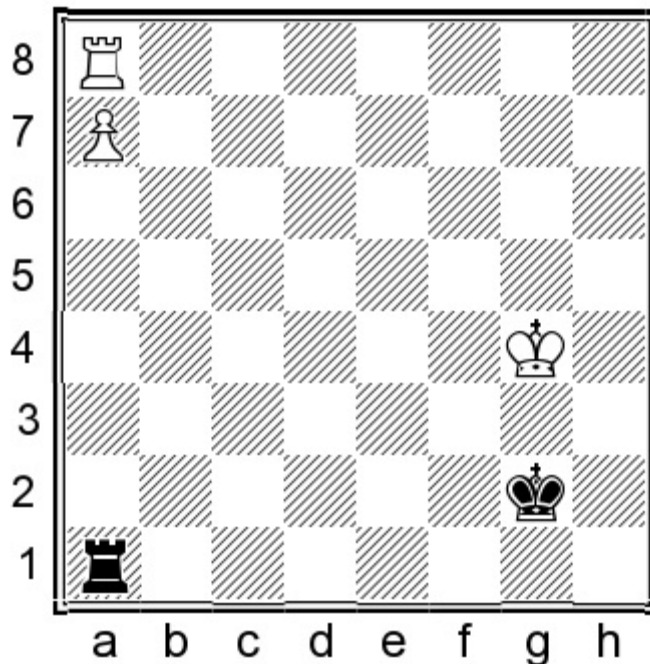
Draw!

½-½

Example 12

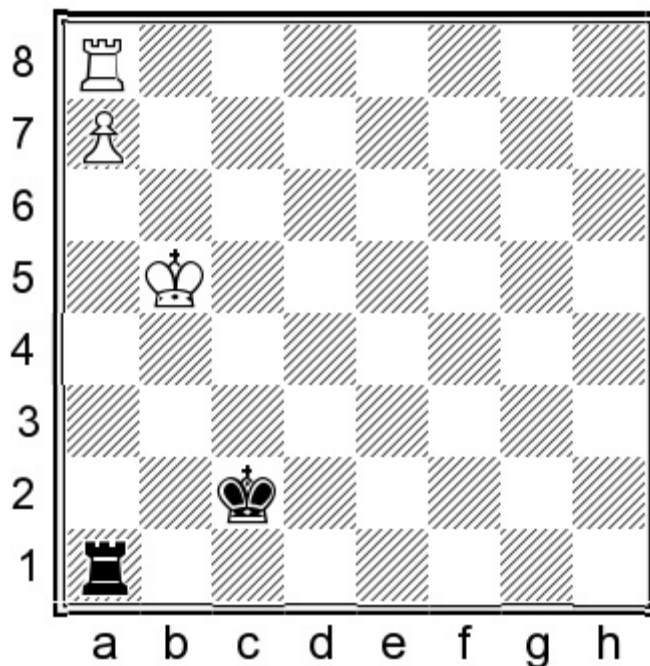
The shadow

Study by A. Troitzky, 1896



“Shadow” is an important defensive element in endgames. Here the black king hides behind the white one because otherwise White with rook checks opens the way for promoting his pawn. In this example, however, White can break this defensive shadow!

1. ♖f4! ♜f2 2. ♗e4 ♜e2 3. ♗d4 ♜d2 4. ♖c4 ♜c2 5. ♖b5



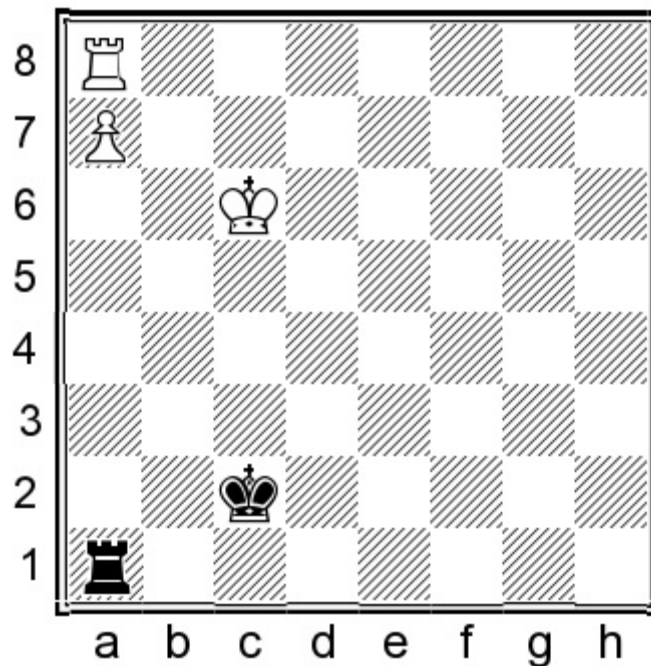
Position after: 5. ♖b5

5... ♜b1+

5... ♜b3 Staying in the shadow would no longer save Black since after 6. ♗b6 the white rook is ready to

move.

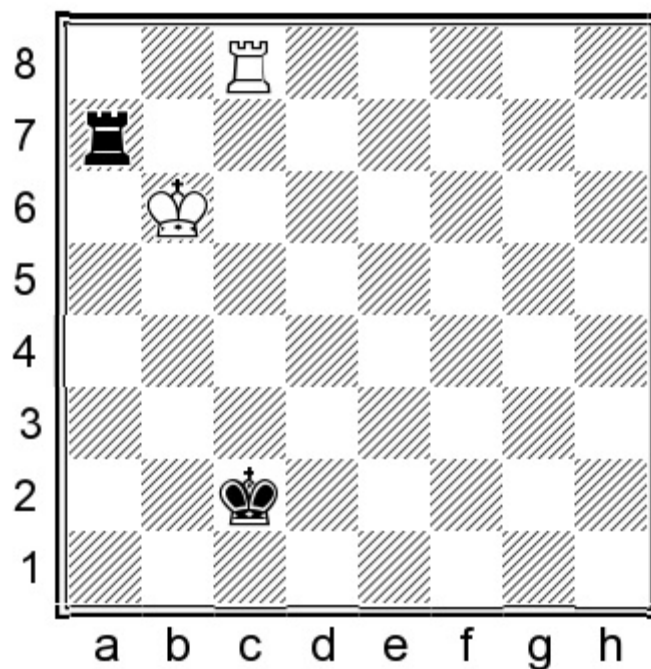
6. ♖c6 ♜a1 7. ♖b7 ♜b1+ 8. ♖c6 ♜a1



Position after: 8... ♜a1

Black seems to have succeeded in his defense, but there is a tactical motif connected with coming out of the shadow.

9. ♜c8! ♜xa7 10. ♖b6+!



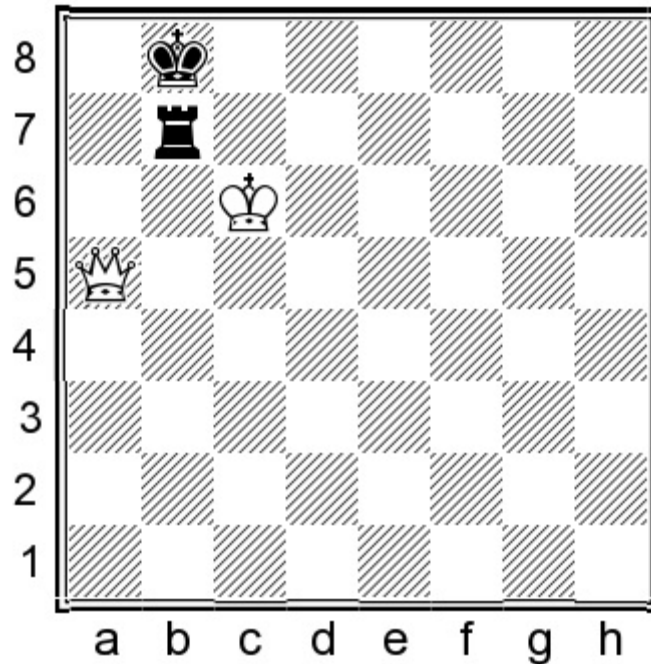
Position after: 10. ♔b6+!

Discovered check and White is winning!

1-0

Example 13

Queen versus rook

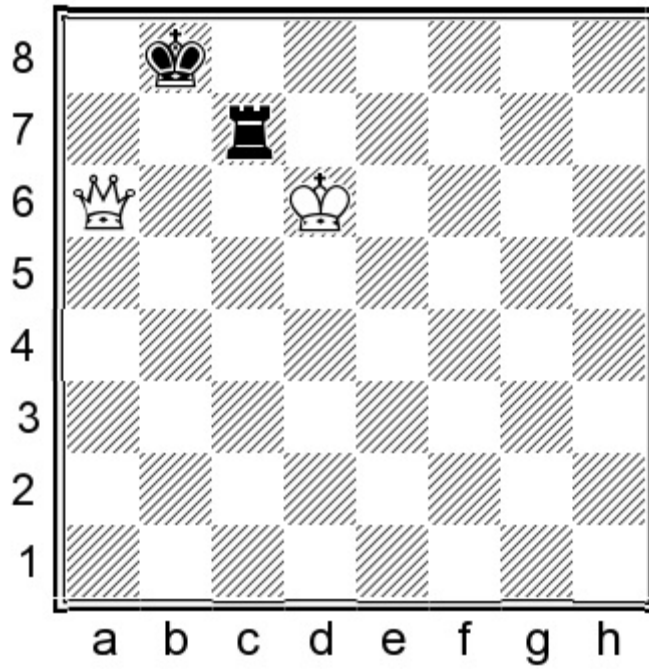


Positions of queen against rook in practical games (of humans) are almost always easily won. Why in the humans' games? It is due to the fact that if you try to play queen vs. rook against a computer you will find out that it won't be easy to win. The reason is that the computer knows very well when it is possible to separate the rook from its king, without allowing a queen fork that would win the rook. For humans that's much harder so it's a lot easier to keep the rook close to the king. In that case this position in the diagram can easily show up, and you will win if you ask yourself one important question. I guess you probably already know which one: what would your opponent play if it were his move?

1. ♙e5+!

If it's Black's move in the starting position, he loses. So White starts maneuvering.

Stalemate is what the weaker side aims for, so bad is 1. ♙a6 since after 1... ♖c7+ White needs to be careful to avoid falling for a trick. 2. ♔d6



Position after: 2. ♔d6

2... ♖d7+! 3. ♕c5 [3. ♕c6? ♖d6+!] 3... ♗c7+ 4. ♕b6? ♗c6+!

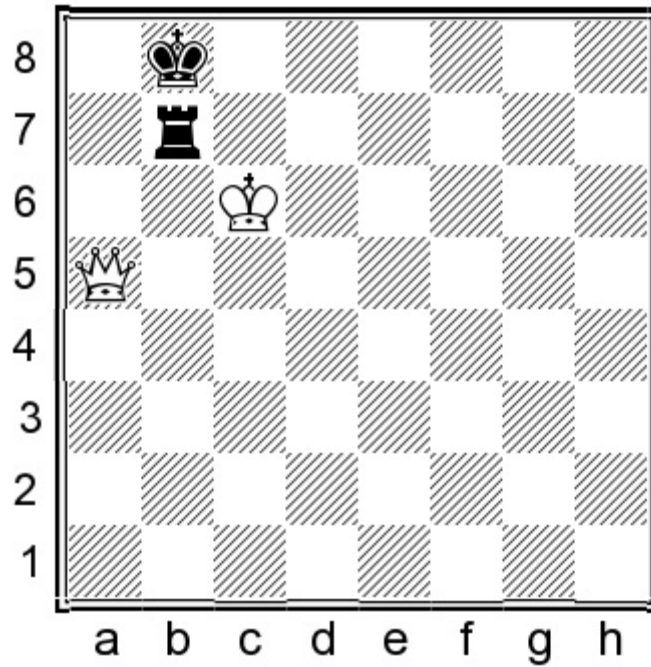
1. ♗e5+! ♔a8

1... ♔c8 2. ♗e8#

2. ♗a1+! ♔b8

2... ♖a7 3. ♗h8#

3. ♗a5!

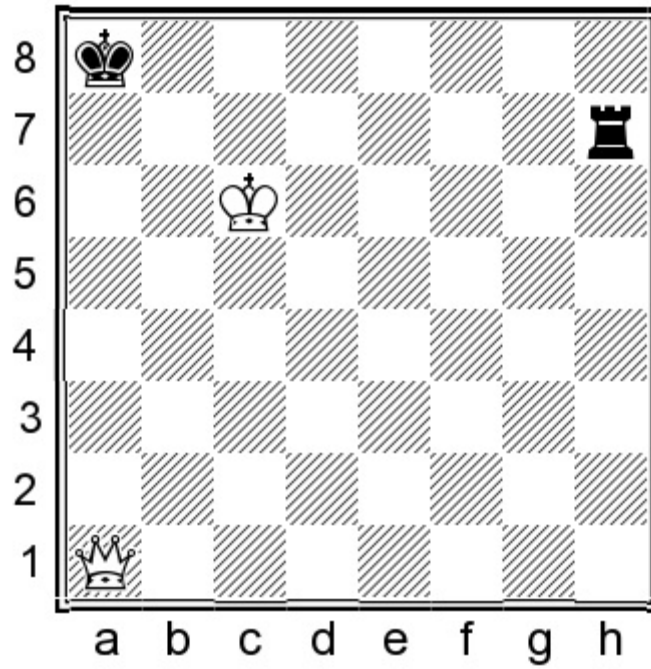


Position after: 3. ♔a5!

Here we are in the position that White wanted. Black has make a long move with his rook, which is now doomed.

3... ♖f7

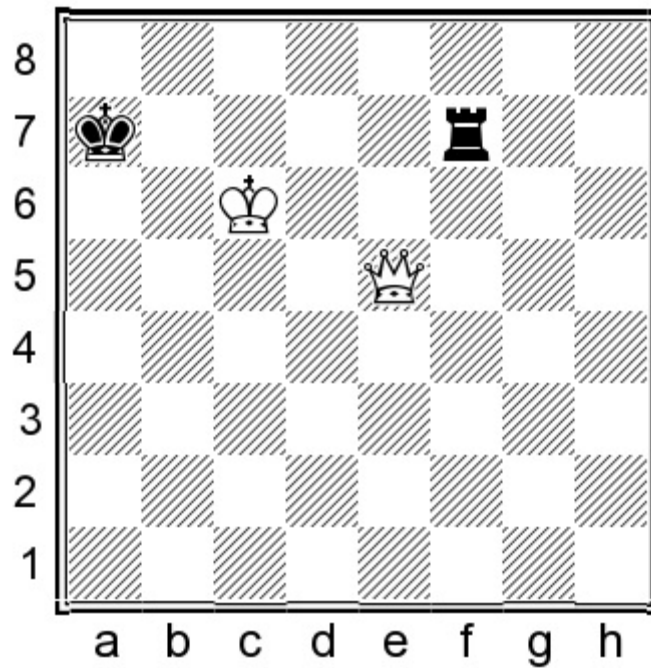
- A) 3... ♖a7 4. ♕d8#
- B) 3... ♖e7 4. ♕b4+-
- C) 3... ♔c8 4. ♕a6+-
- D) 3... ♖g7 4. ♕e5+-
- E) 3... ♖h7 4. ♕e5+ ♔a8 5. ♕a1+



Position after: 5. ♖a1+

5... ♔b8 [5... ♖a7 6. ♕h8#] 6. ♕b1+-

4. ♕e5+! ♔a7



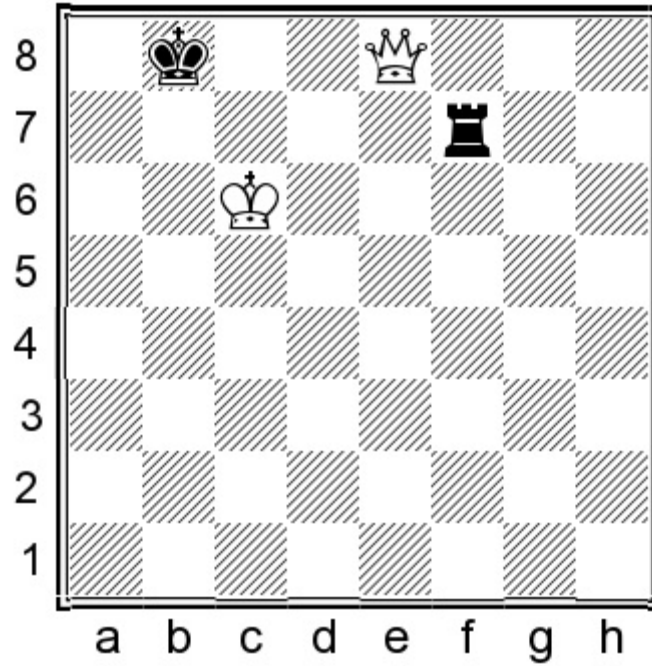
Position after: 4... ♔a7

4... ♔a8 5. ♕e8+

5. ♖e3+! ♔b8

5... ♕a6 6. ♗a3#

6. ♗e8+



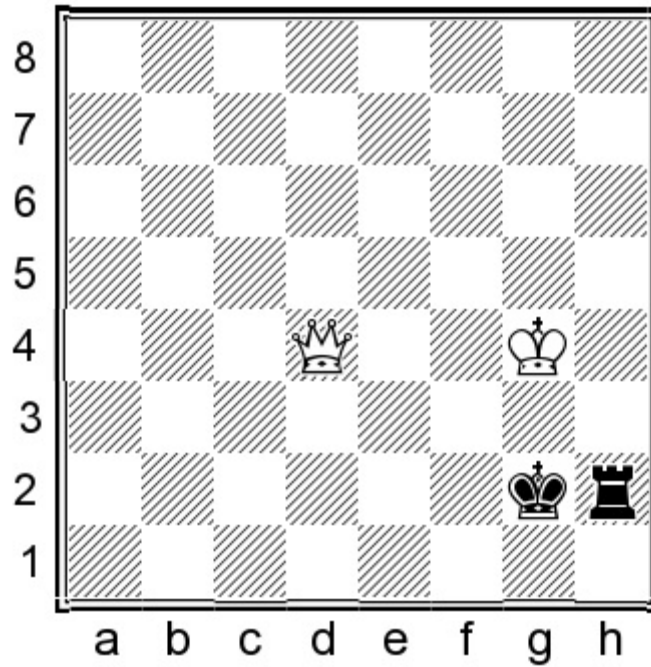
Position after: 6. ♗e8+

And the rook is lost.

1-0

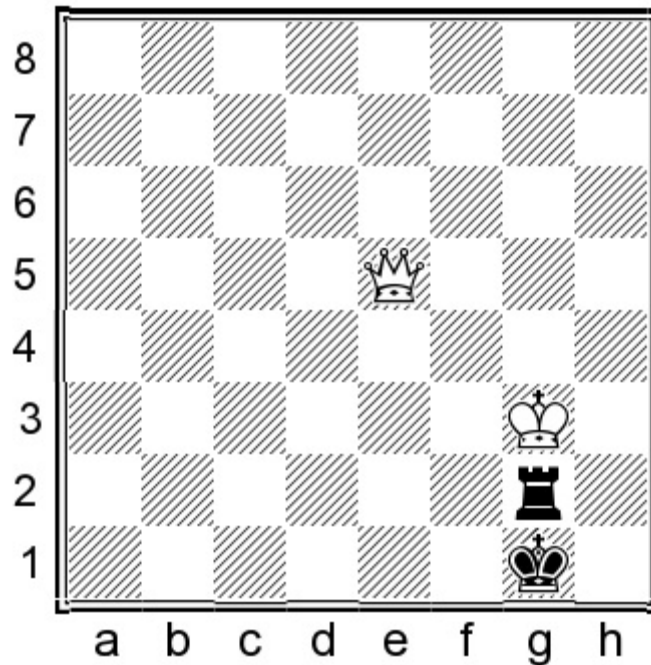
Example 14

From Morozevich – Jakovenko
Pamplona 2006



105. ♔d3

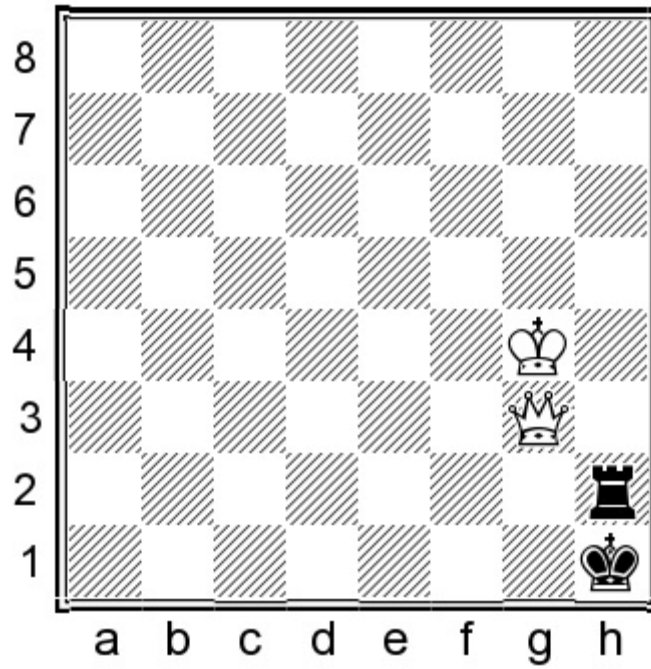
The winning process includes some quiet moves, not just checks all the time. The right move for a quick win was 105. ♔e5! ♔g1 106. ♔g3 ♖g2+



Position after: 106... ♖g2+

107. ♔h3! ♖f2 108. ♔e1+ ♖f1 109. ♔g3+ ♔h1 110. ♔g2#

105. ♔d3 ♔g1 106. ♔e3+ ♔f1 107. ♔c1+ ♔f2 108. ♔d2+ ♔g1 109. ♔e1+ ♔g2 110. ♔g3+ ♔h1



Position after: 110...♔h1

111.♔f3??

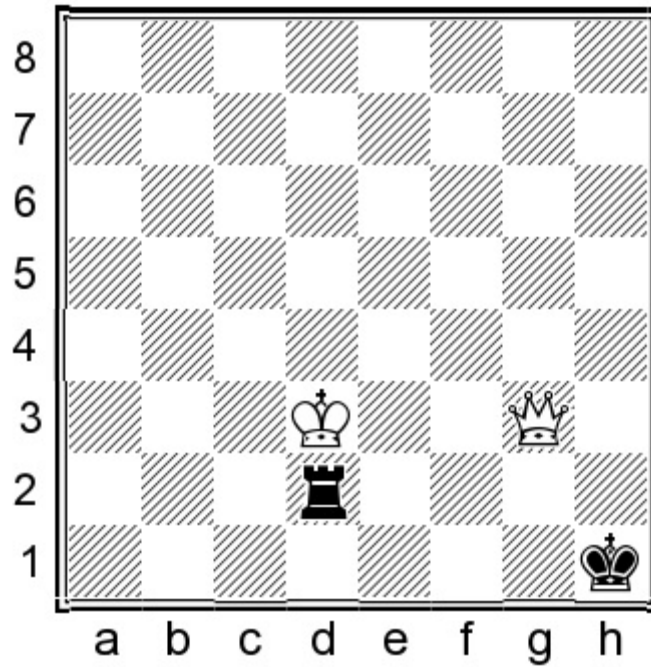
Morozevich falls into the stalemate trap.

111.♕e5! was again winning

111...♖f2+! 112.♔e3

112.♔g4 ♖g2

112...♖e2+! 113.♔d3 ♖d2+



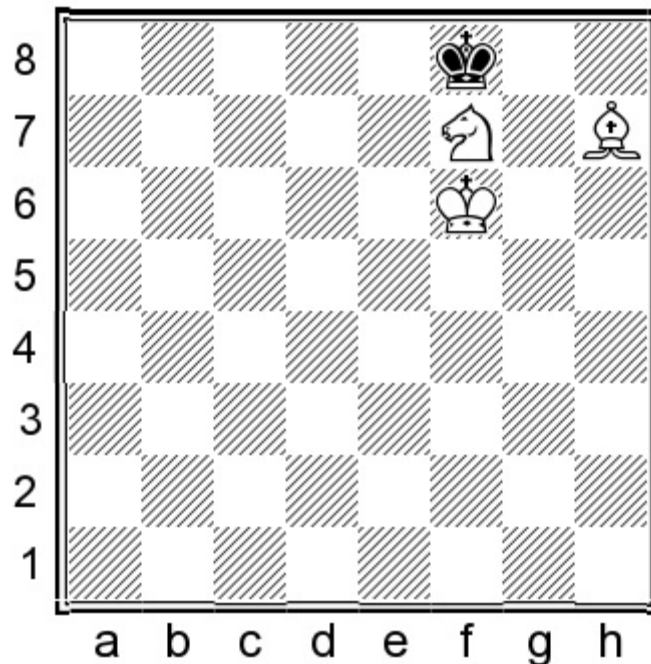
Position after: 113...♖d2+

And since the white king has nowhere to hide, the game is draw!

1/2-1/2

Example 15

Mating with bishop and knight



Giving mate with a knight and a bishop is the most difficult mating process. You need to be aware of the mechanisms for preventing the opponent's king from running to a corner opposite in color to the

squares the bishop moves on. The winning process can be divided into several stages.

1. Pushing the opponent's king to the edge of the board.
2. Driving the opponent's king away from the corner square that is opposite in color to the squares the bishop moves on.
3. During this part of the process, preventing the king from escaping to the center.
4. After pushing the king to the correct corner square – the same color as the squares your bishop moves on – building the mating net.

For the first stage, due to the large number of options, there is no exact recipe. It is important that you organize your knight and bishop to take squares away from the opponent's king, and you will see that the king will have to end up on the edge of the board. Don't worry if you make more moves than necessary, you have 50 moves to win. After completing phase one, you will need about 20 moves to deliver mate. Try it out and you will see that you will easily push the king to the edge of the board.

For phase two, it is important to learn that the knight works on the seventh and fifth ranks. Of course this is the basic position to learn how to mate; it could also be second and fourth rank if you are Black, or even b- or d-file if we rotate it through 90 degrees; it depends on the position you end up in.

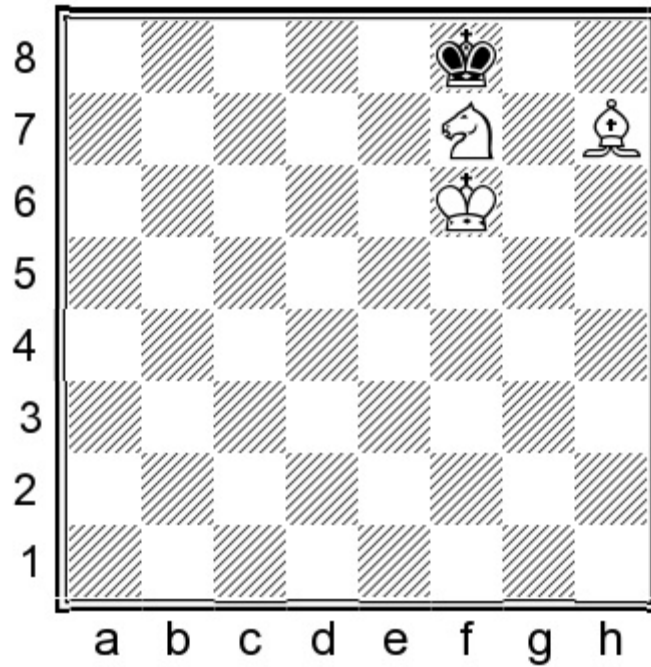
To be successful in stage three, you must learn to build a wall! This is a fundamental problem and even some strong players did not know how to mate, as you will soon see. An important consideration in all phases is the question, which I hope will quickly become part of your routine: what would your opponent play if he were on the move?

In the diagram position, phase one has been accomplished, so it's time to move on to phase two. At this point if it were Black on the move he would have to leave the dark square where there is no mate and move to e8. So the solution is to maneuver and come back to the same position, but with Black to move!

1.♙f5!

Of course White can move the bishop anywhere on the diagonal to lose a tempo and get back to the same position with Black on the move. Remember, all pieces can lose a tempo except the knight, which can't!

1...♖g8 2.♙g6 ♖f8 3.♙h7!



Position after: 3. ♔h7!

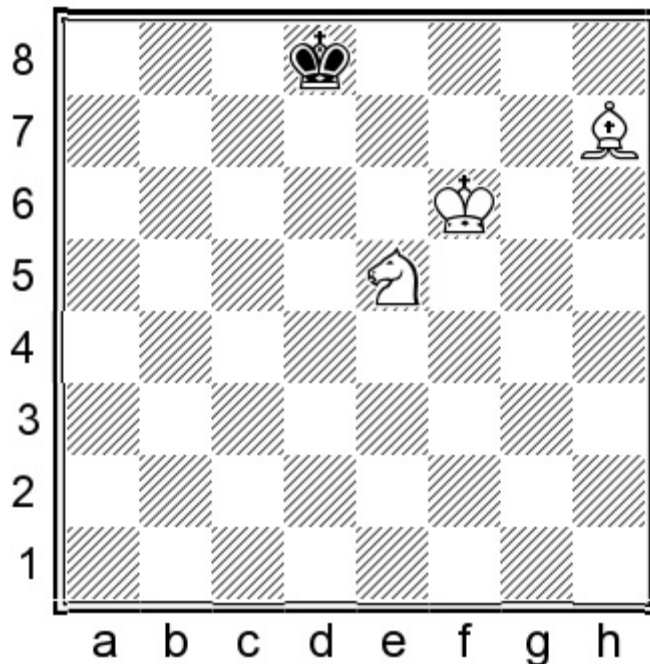
Phase two is now completed.

3... ♕e8 4. ♖e5!

The knight acts on the fifth and seventh ranks! If you see someone jumping with the knight to the sixth rank, for instance, at this point you will know that he is not familiar with the mechanism of winning this endgame.

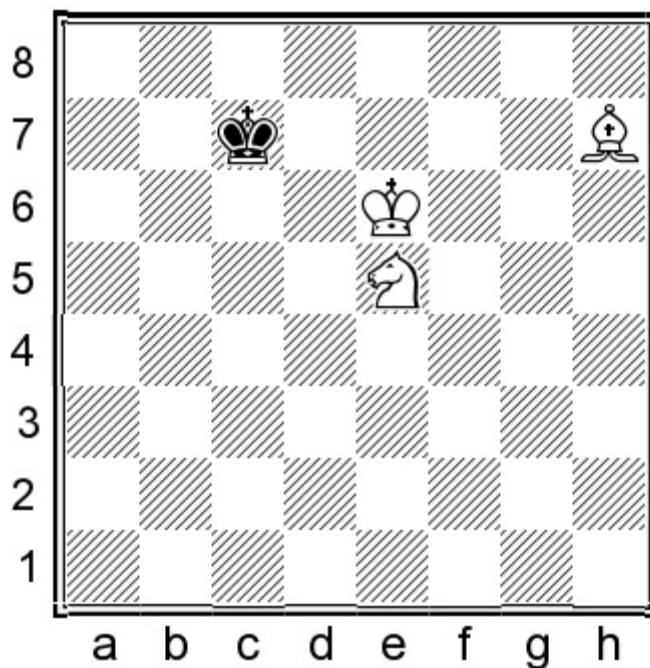
4... ♕f8

4... ♕d8!



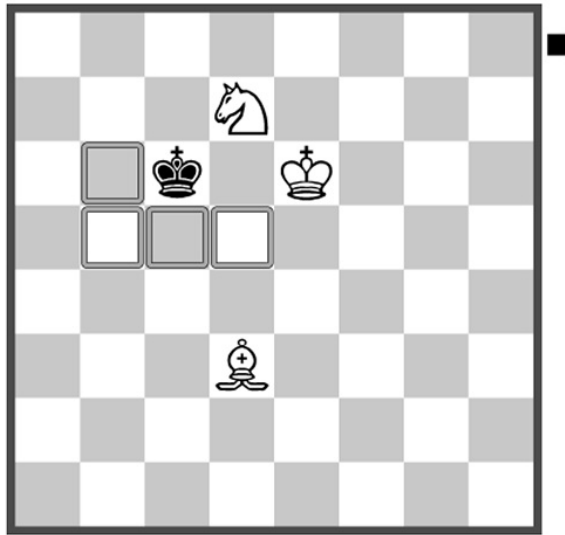
Position after: 4...♔d8!

This move is a real test to see if you know how to mate with a knight and a bishop! Black's king immediately runs towards the center or the a1-square, which is again an unfavorable corner for White. Now it is important to learn the art of building the wall! 5.♕e6! ♔c7



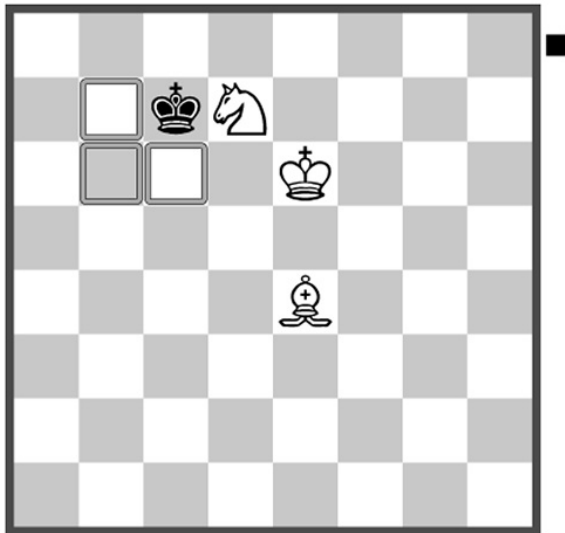
Position after: 5...♔c7

[5...♕e8 6.♘d7 ♔d8 7.♕d6 ♕e8 8.♙g6+ transposes to 4...♕f8] 6.♘d7!! Preparing the wall! 6...♕c6 The back king wants to run away through the b5-square, but now there follows 7.♙d3!!



Position after: 7. ♔d3!!

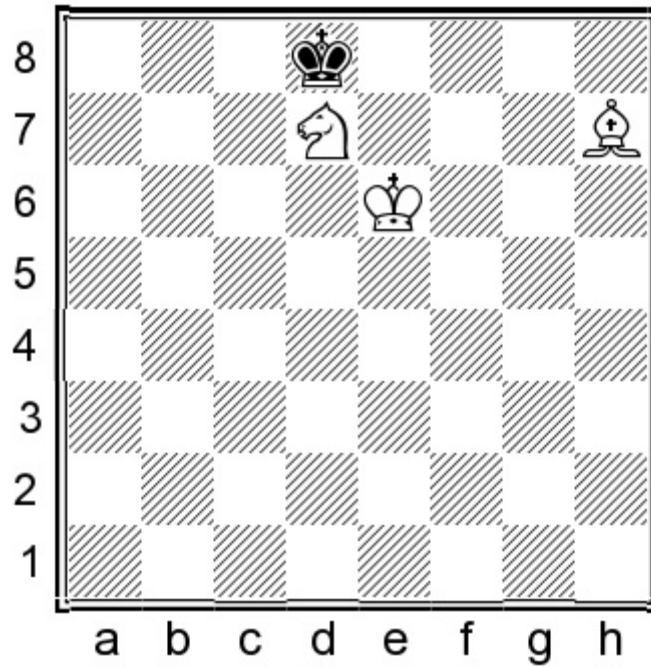
and the wall has been built. The black king can't escape now! 7... ♚c7 8. ♔e4!



Position after: 8. ♔e4!

Another wall! 8... ♚d8 9. ♔d6 ♚e8 10. ♔g6+ And again it's the transposition to 4... ♚f8.

5. ♘d7+! ♚e8 6. ♔e6 ♚d8

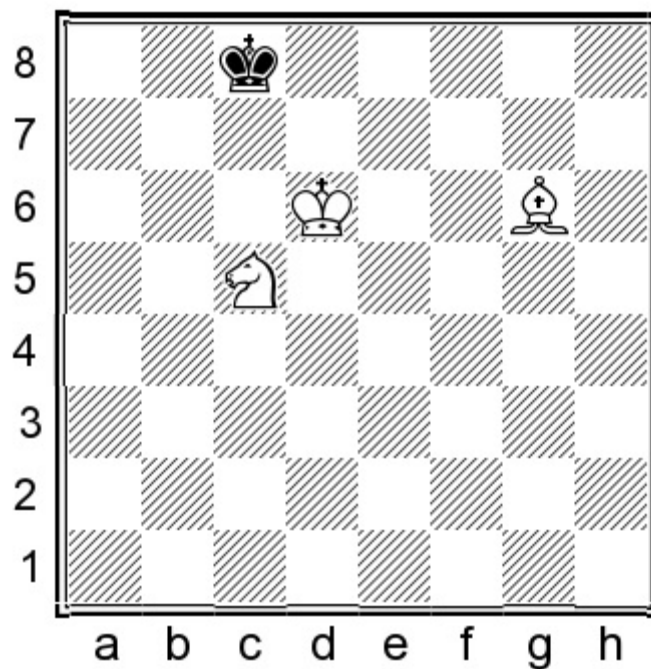


Position after: 6...♔d8

7.♔d6

The king is controlling the dark squares on the seventh rank, so that the black king cannot escape.

7...♔e8 8.♙g6+ ♔d8 9.♘c5! ♔c8

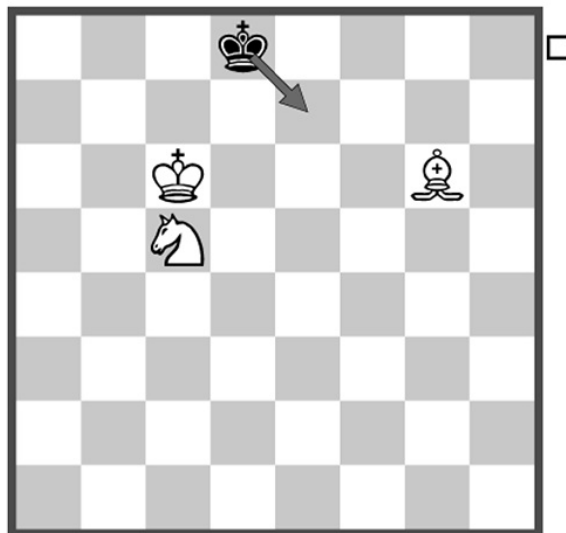


Position after: 9...♔c8

Now it's a key moment in phase three.

10. ♔h5!

The result of an important question: what would Black play if he were on the move! If White opts for 10. ♔c6 then Black after 10... ♔d8



Position after: 10... ♔d8

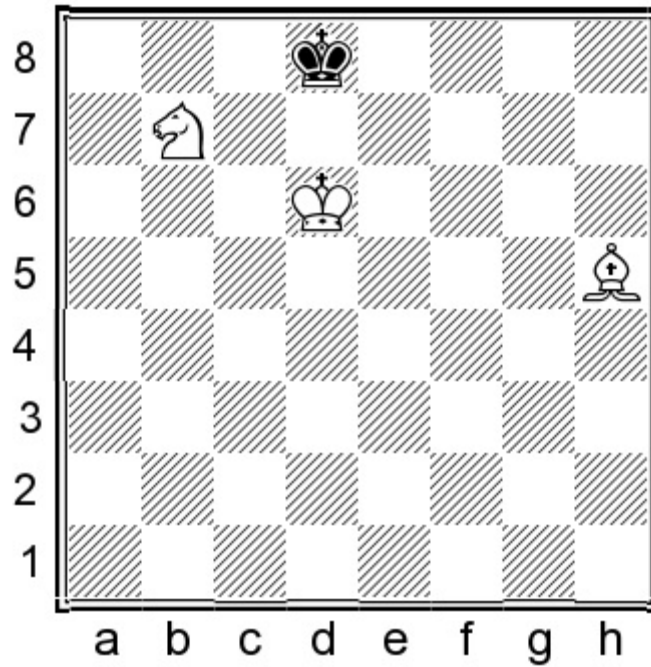
threatens to escape to e7, which White can prevent only by returning his king with 11. ♔d6 so after 11... ♔c8 there is no progress for White.

Black would like to play

10... ♔d8

but White can now push the king to the light-square corner.

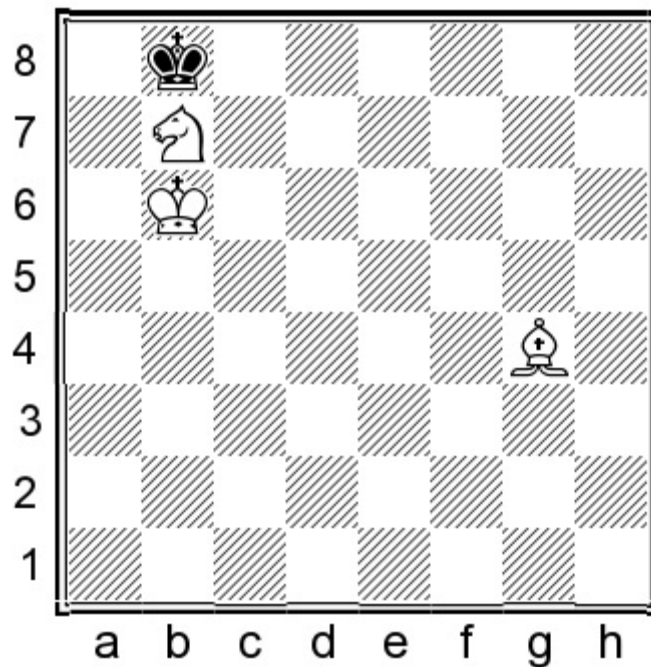
11. ♖b7+!



Position after: 11. ♞b7+!

The knight was making a letter W and from f7 finished on b7!

11...♔c8 12.♔c6 ♔b8 13.♔b6 ♔c8 14.♕g4+ ♔b8



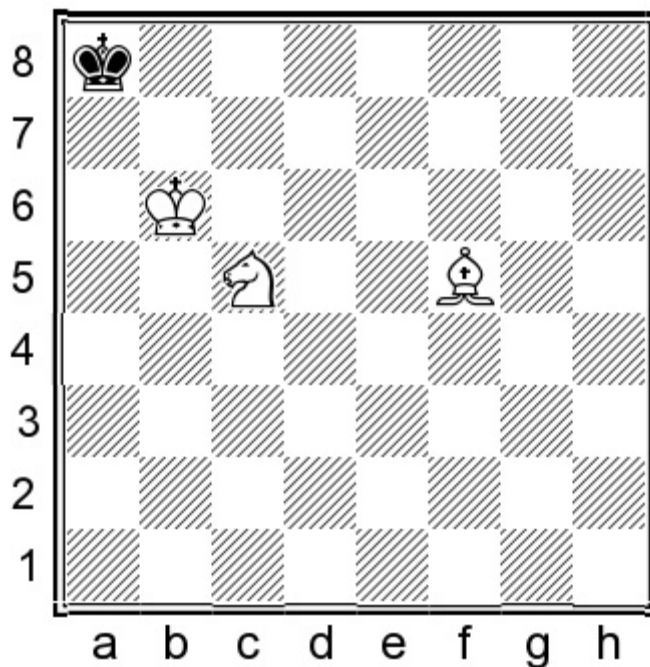
Position after: 14... ♔b8

The first three phases have been completed and now it's time for the fourth phase.

15. ♖c5 ♔a8

What would Black play if he were on the move?

16. ♕f5!



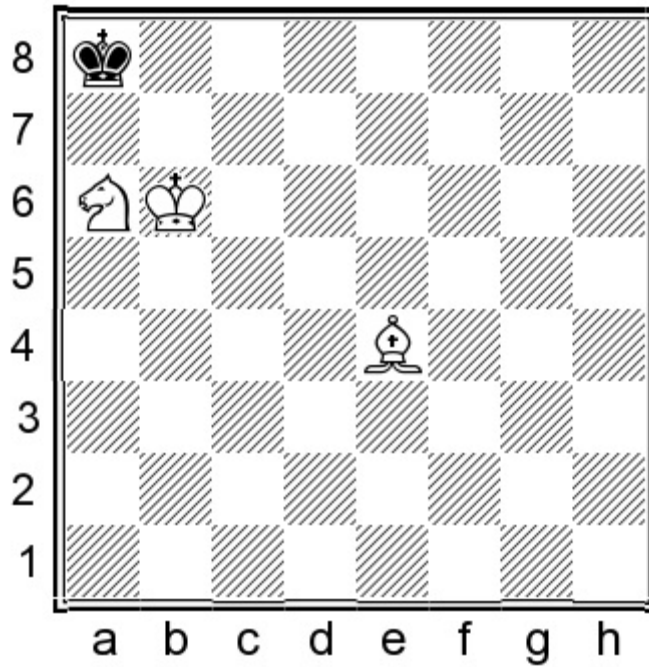
Position after: 16. ♕f5!

Of course 16. ♖a6 is premature since it's stalemate.

16... ♔b8 17. ♖a6+

And only now does the white knight have permission to jump to the sixth rank!

17... ♔a8 18. ♕e4#!



Position after: 18. ♕e4#!

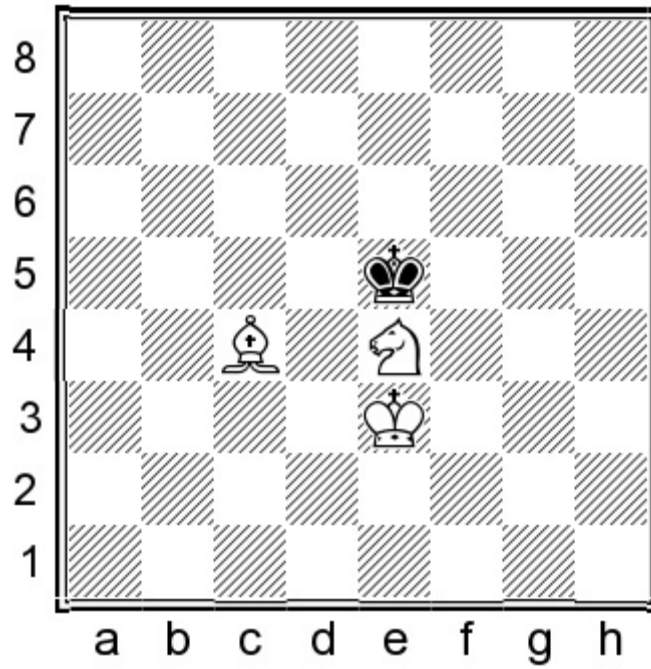
If you master this process there won't be secrets for you in bishop and knight mating, so you will be able to do it even with little time in blitz chess. The only thing that can confuse you is if the position is rotated sideways, but even then I believe that won't be a problem either.

1-0

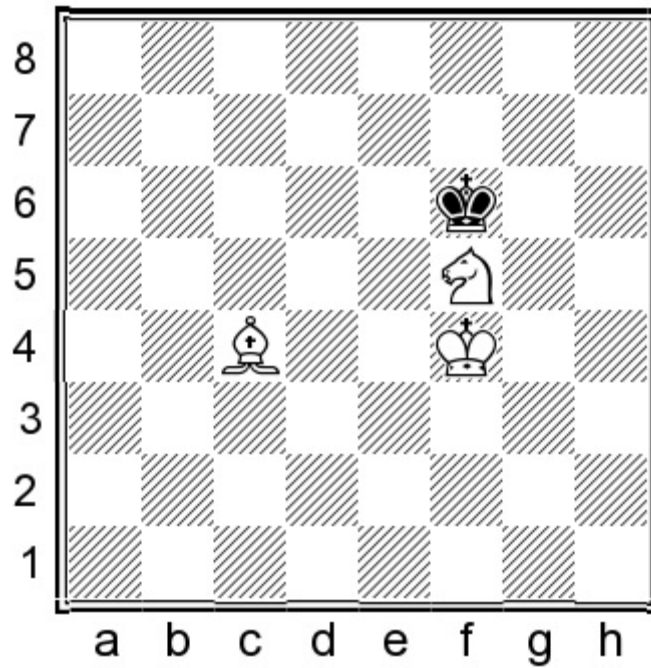
Example 16

Chasing the king into the corner

This example shows how to push the king to the edge of the board.

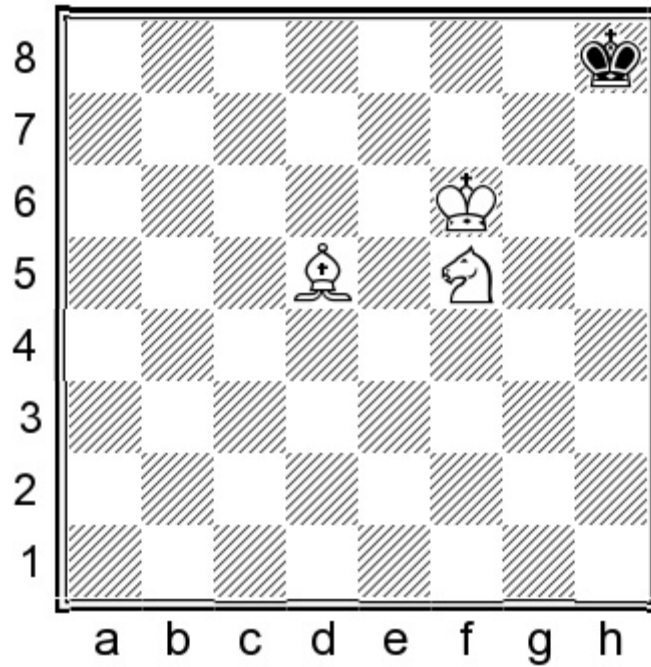


1. ♖g3 ♕f6 2. ♕f4 ♕g6 3. ♖f5 ♕f6



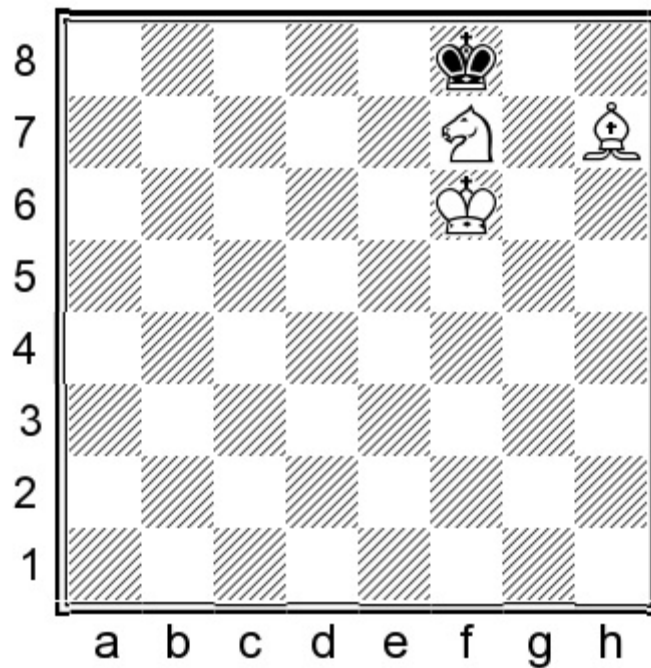
Position after: 3... ♕f6

4. ♗d5 ♕g6 5. ♕e5 ♕h7 6. ♕f6 ♕h8



Position after: 6... ♔h8

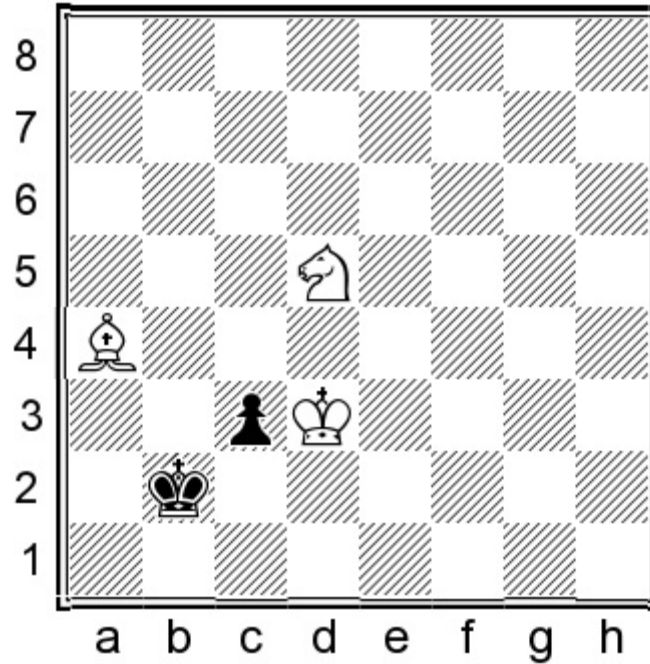
7. ♘d6 ♕h7 8. ♘f7 ♔g8 9. ♗e4 ♕f8 10. ♗h7



Position after: 10. ♗h7

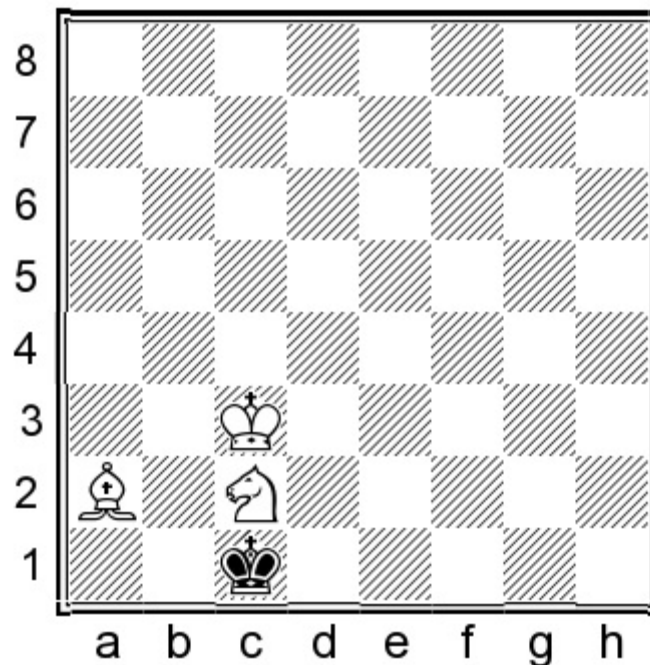
And White has achieved the winning setup. This mate is difficult, but in time you can learn it. If the learning doesn't go so smoothly, just proceed with something else and come back when you are in mood for this endgame.

Example 17
From Ushenina – Girya
Geneva 2013



In this game Anna Ushenina, at that time the reigning women's world champion, did not know the mechanisms I have taught you. Although she had enough time on the clock she failed to mate her opponent within 50 moves. Take a look of what happened.

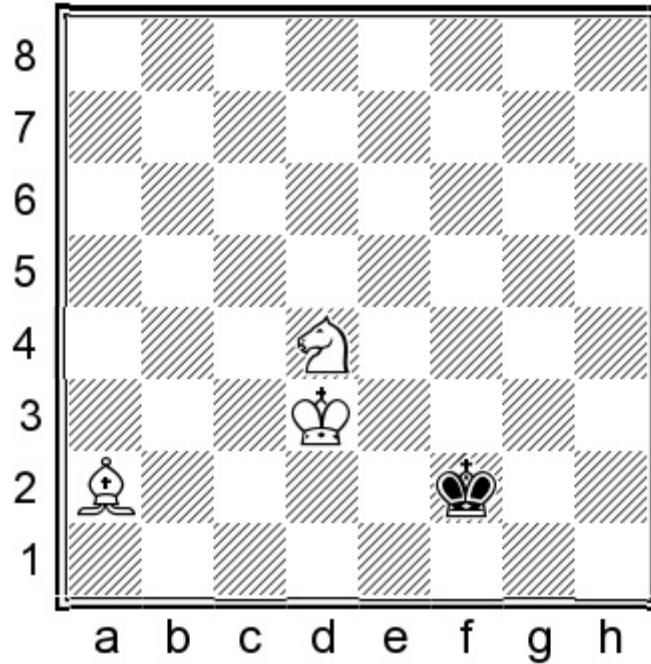
72. ♖xc3 ♔a1 73. ♗d1 ♔a2 74. ♙c2 ♔a1 75. ♕c3 ♔a2 76. ♙b3+ ♔a1 77. ♗e3 ♔b1 78. ♗c2 ♔c1 79. ♙a2



Position after: 79. ♔a2

The winning position has been set up! It's on the first rank, instead of the eighth rank you've been taught, but the mechanisms are the same.

79... ♖d1 80. ♘d4 ♕e1 81. ♖d3 ♕f2

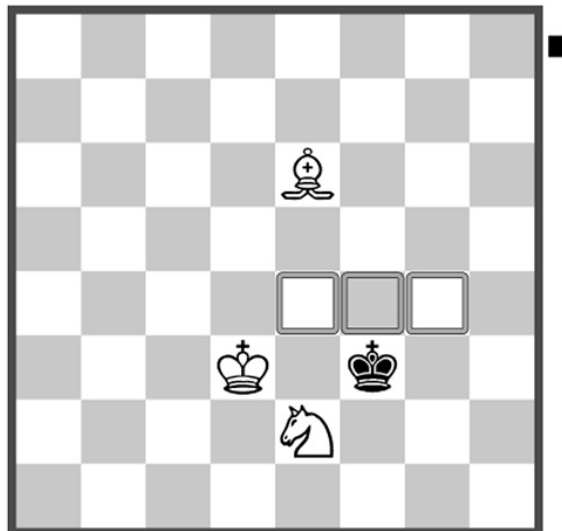


Position after: 81... ♕f2

82. ♔d5?

Not knowing how to build the wall!

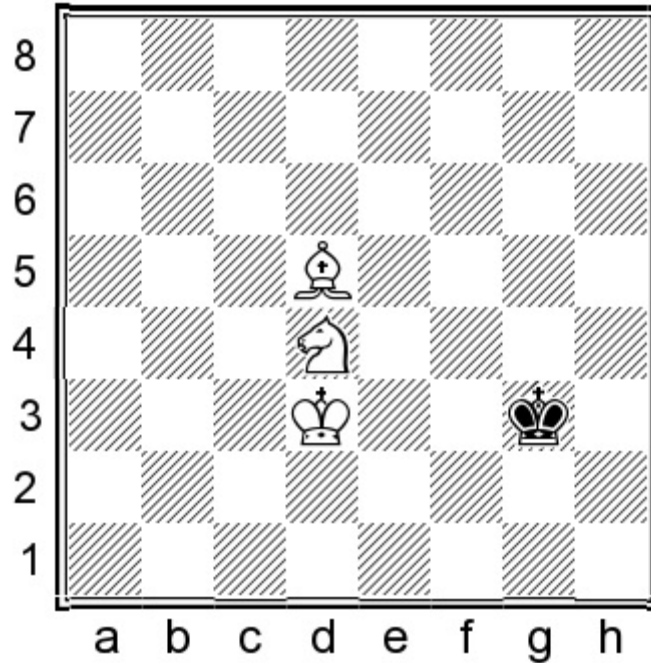
82. ♘e2! ♕f3 83. ♔e6



Position after: 83. ♖e6

This is what you have learned!

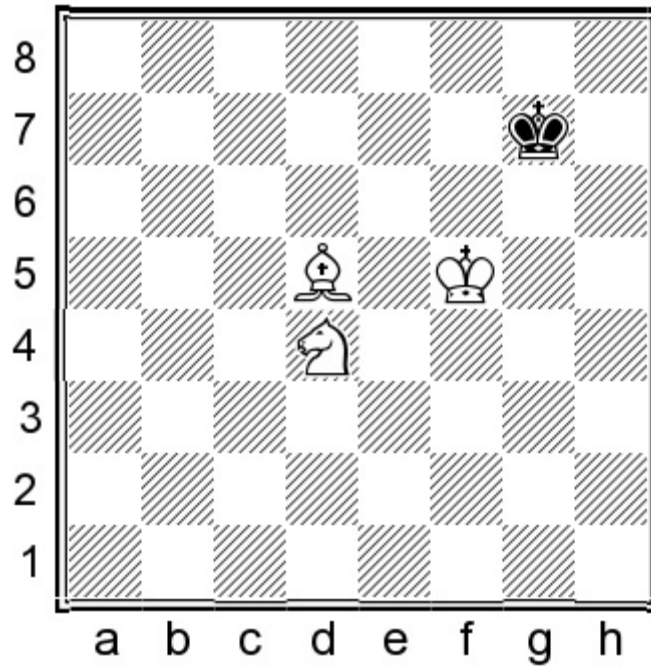
82...♔g3!



Position after: 82...♔g3!

Now it is impossible to prevent Black's king from running to the unfavorable dark-squared corner h8, from where it has already been driven out. So 10 moves have been wasted.

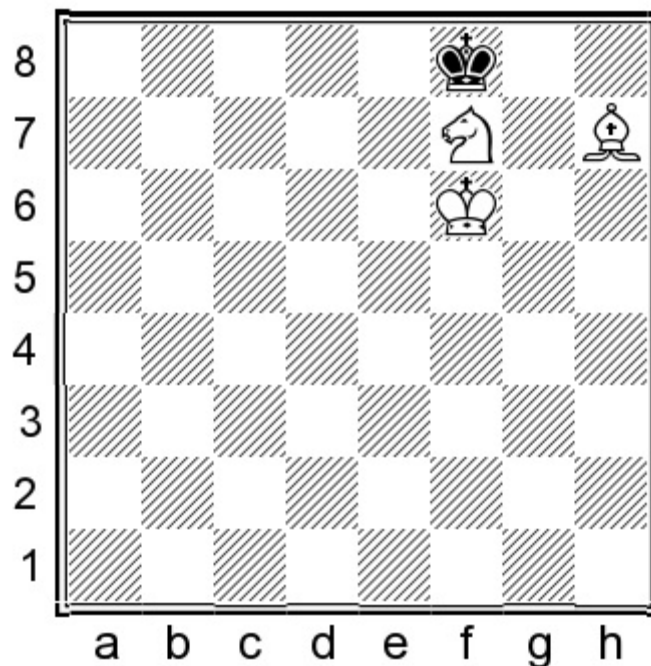
83.♔e3 ♔g4 84.♖e4 ♔g5 85.♔f3 ♔f6 86.♔f4 ♔g7 87.♔g5 ♔f7 88.♔f5 ♔g7 89.♖d5



Position after: 89. ♔d5

What Ushenina did very well in this game was pushing her opponent's king to the edge of the board; she was achieving that quite easily.

89... ♖h6 90. ♗e6 ♖h7 91. ♖f6 ♖g8 92. ♗f4+ ♖h8 93. ♕e4 ♖g8 94. ♗h3 ♖h8 95. ♗g5 ♖g8 96. ♗f7 ♖f8 97. ♕h7



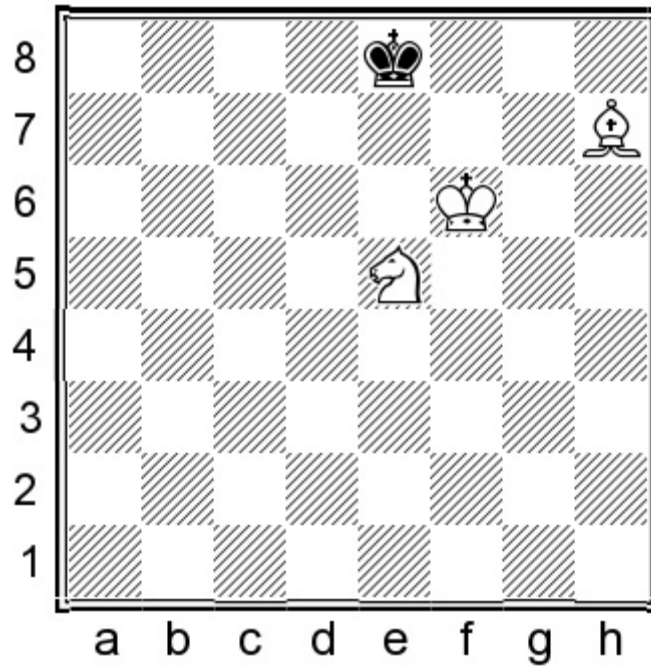
Position after: 97. ♕h7

White has achieved the winning setup for the second time.

97...♔e8 98.♘f5?

Because of her previous bad experience when her opponent's king ran away, Ushenina is now trying to "find something by luck". But as you already know the rule, the knight needs to go to the fifth or seventh rank. Ushenina broke this rule on the next moves.

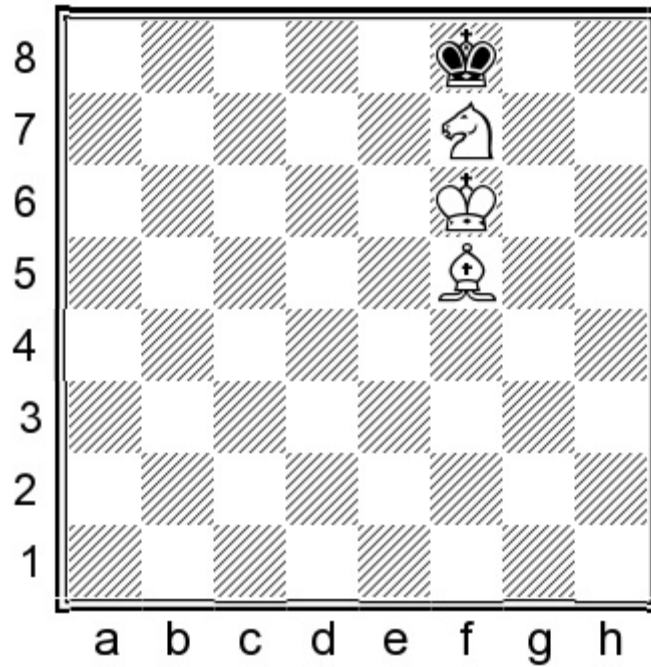
98.♘e5!



Position after: 98.♘e5!

98...♔d8 99.♔e6 ♔c7 100.♘d7 ♔c6 101.♘d3

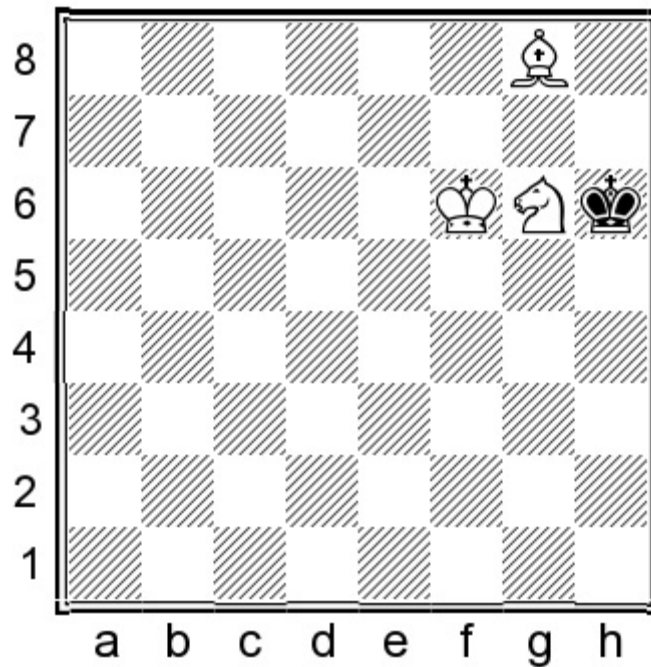
98...♔f8



Position after: 98... ♔f8

99. ♖h6? ♕e8 100. ♗f7 ♖f8 101. ♗e5 ♔g8 102. ♗g6? ♕h7 103. ♘e6 ♖h6 104. ♘g8

The winning setup appears for the third time!

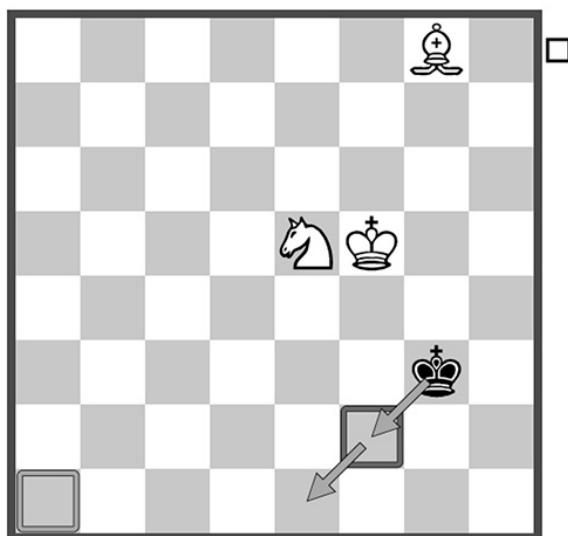


Position after: 104. ♘g8

104... ♕h5 105. ♗e5

105. ♕f5 ♖h6 and the king returns to the dark square.

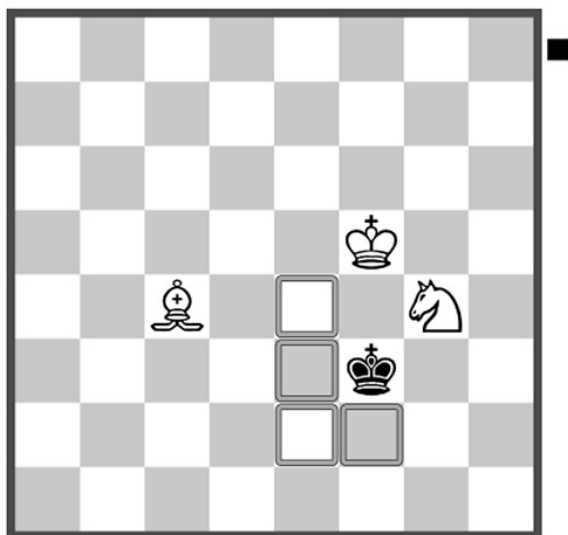
105...♔h4 106.♕f5 ♔g3



Position after: 106...♔g3

107.♖c4

107.♗g4 ♔f3 108.♖c4!



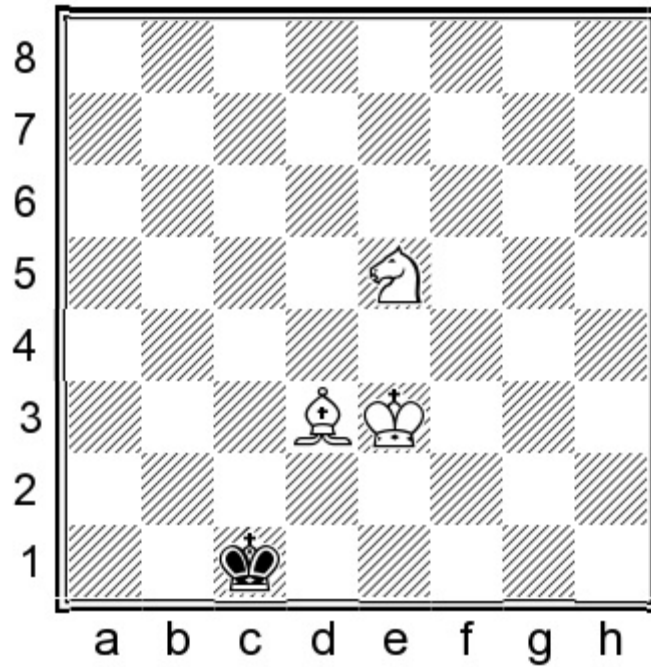
Position after: 108.♖c4!

Wall!

107...♔f2

And the king again runs to the dark square.

108.♔f4 ♔e1 109.♔e3 ♔d1 110.♖d3 ♔c1



Position after: 110...♔c1

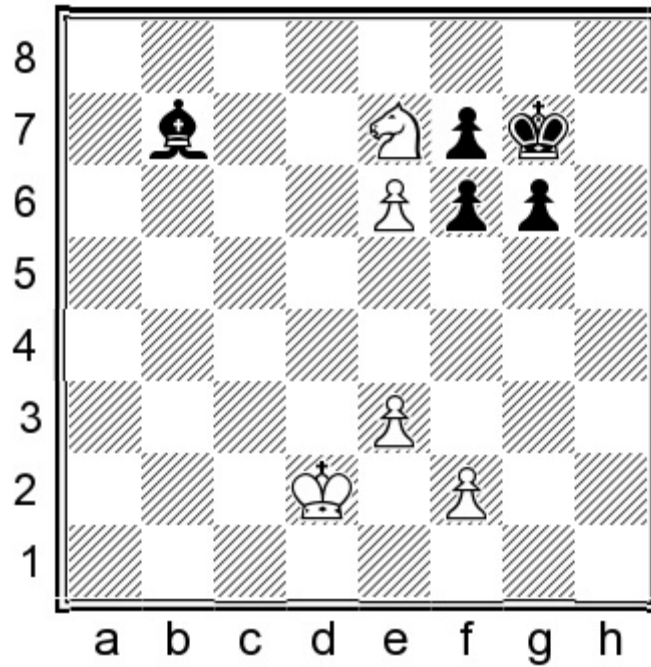
111.♘c4 ♕d1 112.♘b6 ♕c1 113.♘a4 ♕d1 114.♙e4 ♕c1 115.♙d3 ♕d1 116.♘b2+ ♕c1 117.♘c4 ♕d1
 118.♙g6 ♕c1 119.♙f5 ♕d1 120.♘b6 ♕c1 121.♘a4 ♕d1 122.♘b2+ ♕c1 123.♘c4 ♕d1 124.♙d3 ♕c1
 125.♙c3 ♕d1 126.♙d3

1/2-1/2

Example 18

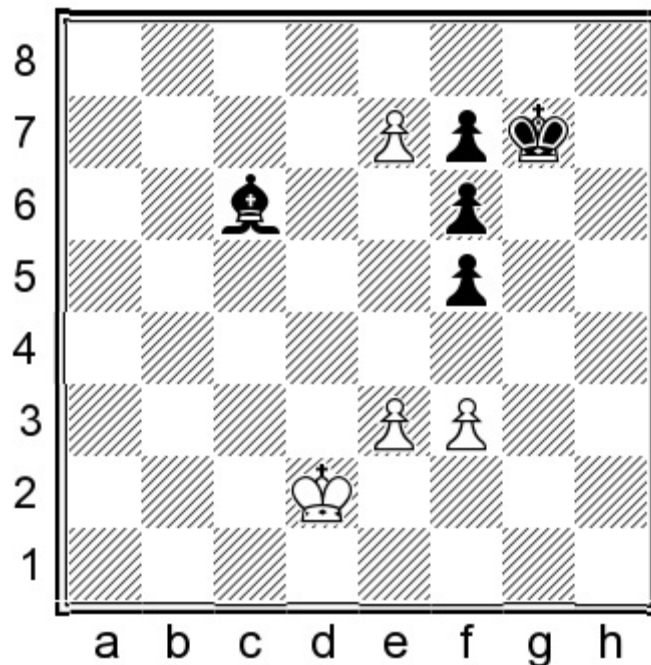
The wall motif

Study



Limiting the potential penetration of an opponent by creating a wall is an important defensive resource. Here it seems that White will lose his knight, but there is a great solution.

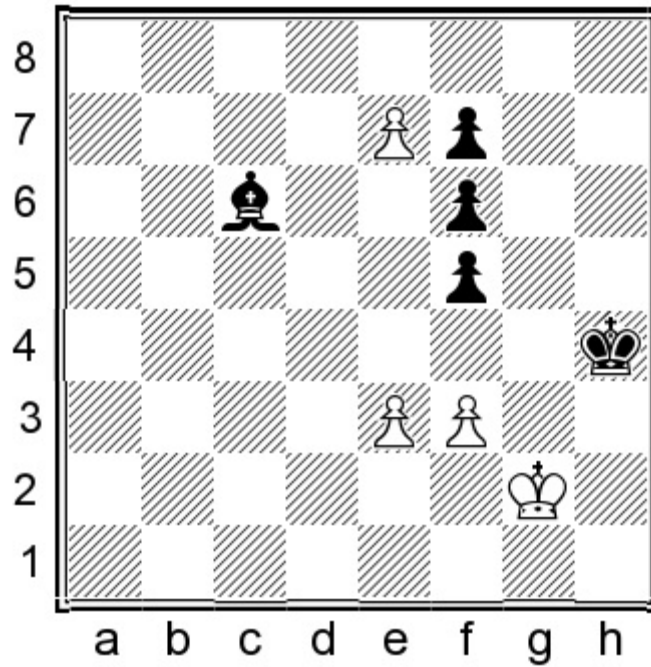
1. ♖f5+!! ♗xf5 2. e7 ♘c6 3. f3!



Position after: 3.f3!

3...f4

3...♔g6 4. ♔e2 ♔g5 5. ♔f2 ♔h4 6. ♔g2

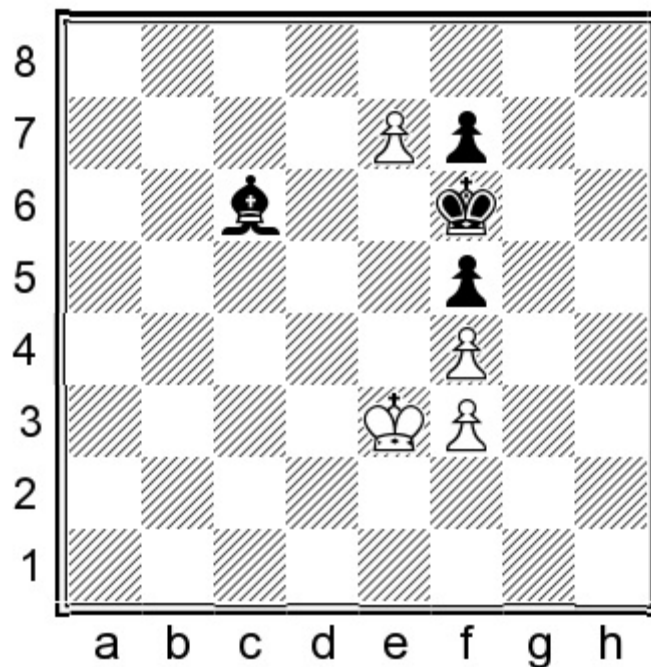


Position after: 6. ♔g2

And White is just in time to create the wall to block Black's king.

4.e4!

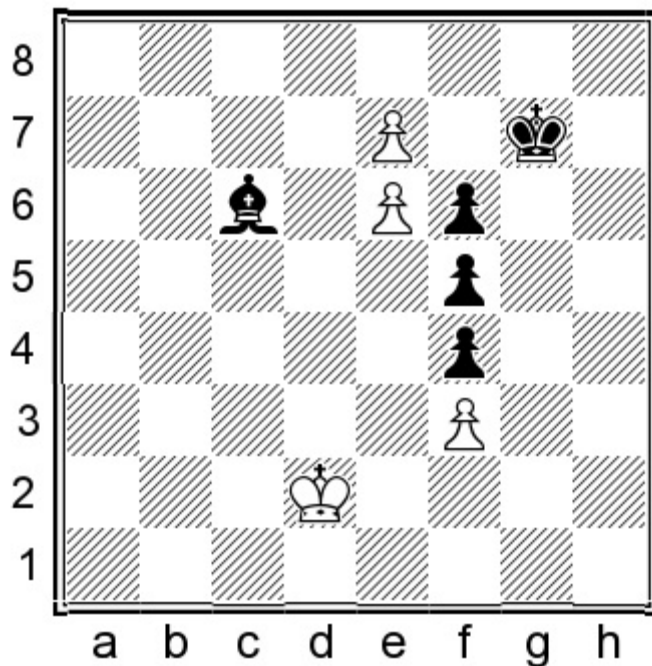
Black has offered to sacrifice a pawn to create a hole for penetration with his king. It would be a mistake to take that pawn. 4.exf4 f5 5. ♔e3 ♔f6



Position after: 5... ♔f6

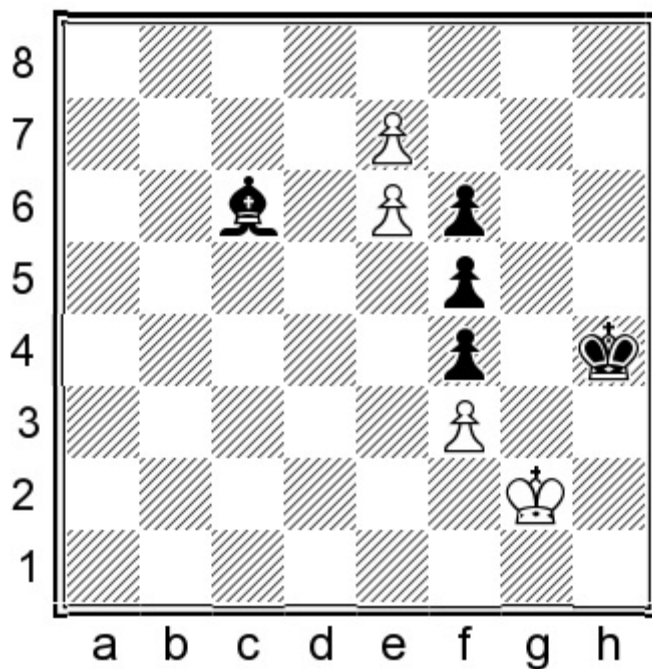
Black has activated his king and he will collect the e-pawn.

4...f5 5.e5 f6 6.e6



Position after: 6.e6

6...♔h6 7.♔e2 ♕h5 8.♔f2 ♕h4 9.♔g2



Position after: 9.♔g2

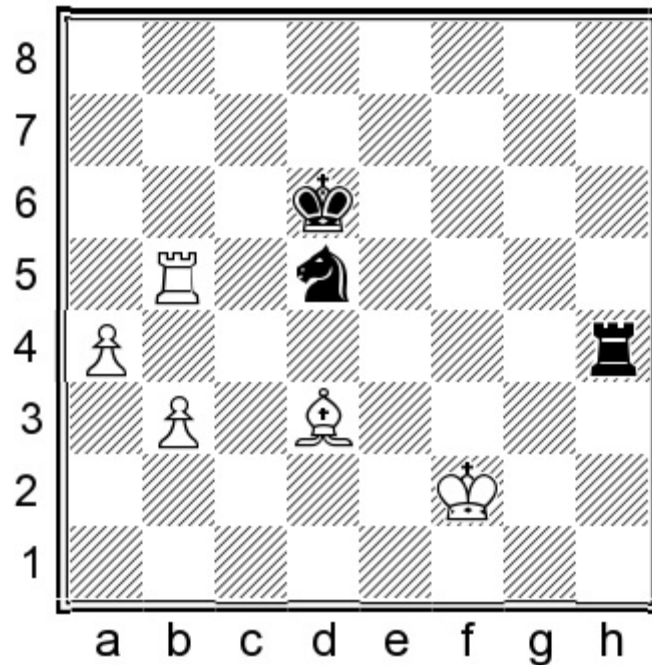
An unbreakable wall has been created and the game is a draw! ½-½

Example 19

From Jankovic – Shyam

Moscow 2012

Controlling the squares of one color, while the opponent has no possibility of fighting on the squares of that color, may often mean salvation for the defending side.

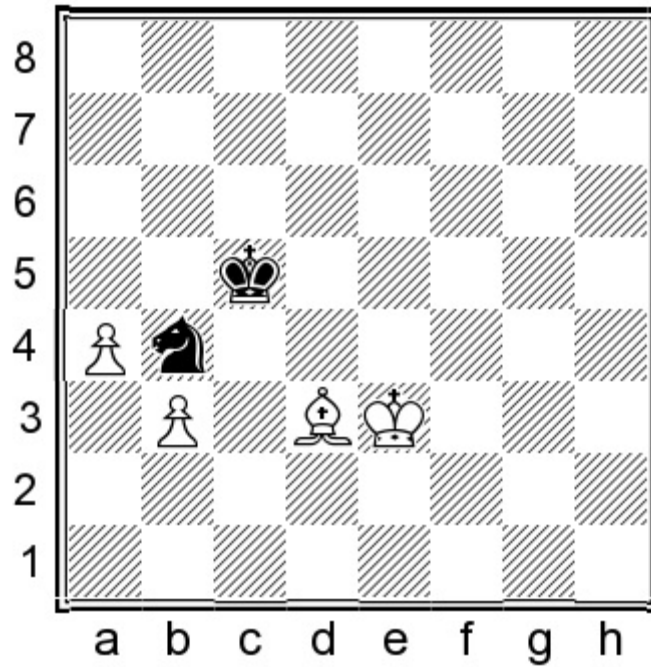


A great example is this ending. Even though I had two pawns more, I couldn't win it because Black had control over the dark squares, and also there was a stalemate motif!

47...♖b4!

For Black it is crucial to exchange the white rook, because it is a piece that can fight on the dark squares.

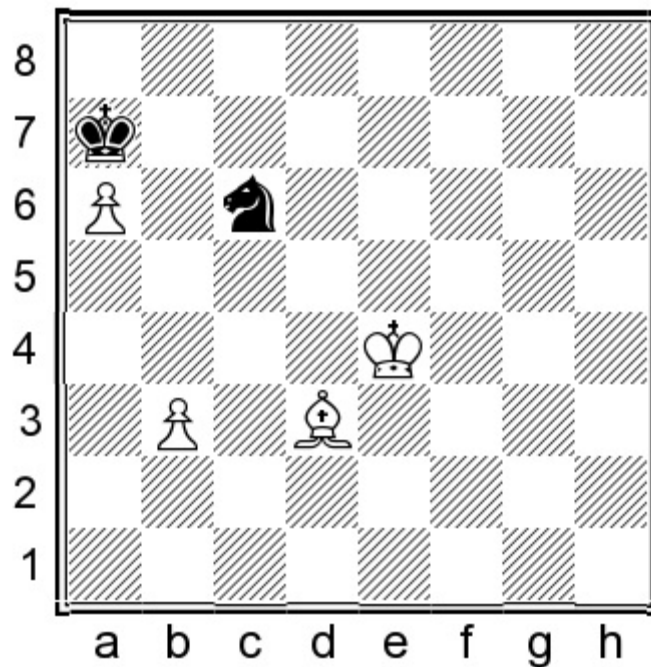
48.♖xb4 ♜xb4 49.♔e3 ♕c5



Position after: 49...♔c5

I won't comment on every move, but you can see for yourself that I failed to break Black's wall.

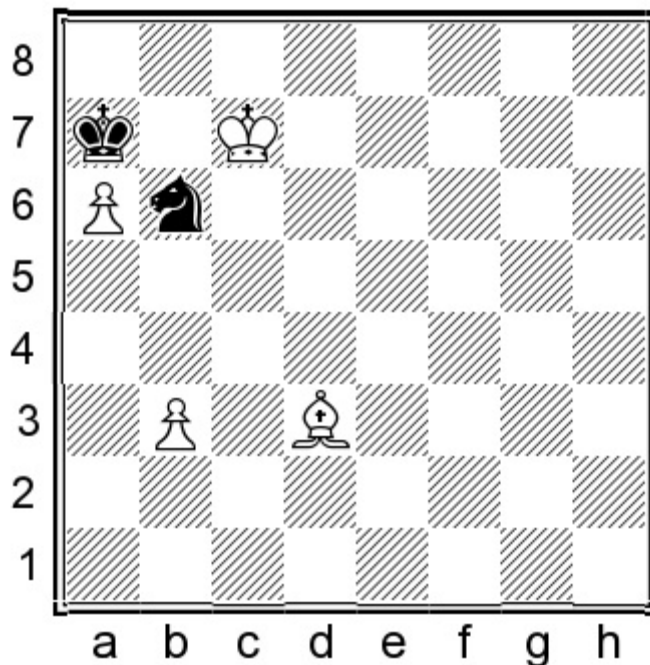
50.a5 ♘c6 51.a6 ♔b6 52.♕e4 ♔a7



Position after: 52...♔a7

Black's king has established an important position on a dark square. Now it is time for the black knight to control the b6-square.

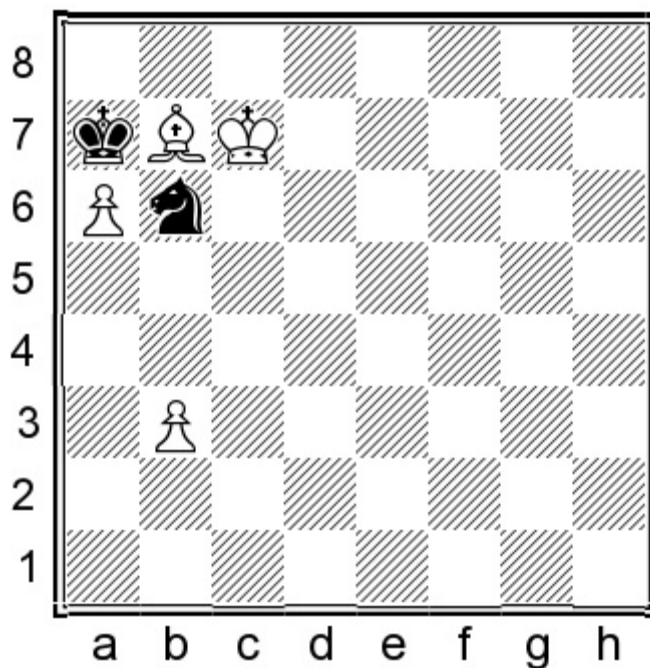
53.♔d5 ♖e7+ 54.♔d6 ♜c8+ 55.♔c7 ♖b6



Position after: 55... ♖b6

Black has set up unbreakable defensive formation. Now all he has to do is wait.

56.♙c4 ♜a8+ 57.♔d6 ♖b6 58.♙b5 ♜c8+ 59.♔c7 ♖b6 60.♔c6 ♜c8 61.♔d7 ♖b6+ 62.♔c6 ♜c8
 63.♙c4 ♖b6 64.♔b5 ♜c8 65.♔a5 ♖b6 66.♙b5 ♜c8 67.♙c6 ♖b6 68.♔b5 ♜c8 69.♙b7 ♖b6 70.♔c6
 ♔b8 71.♔d6 ♔a7 72.♔c7



Position after: 72.♔c7

After long maneuvering, I have apparently taken all the squares from Black's knight. But now it's a stalemate trick that saves Black!

72...♞a4!

Taking the knight leads to a stalemate and now it is obvious that White can make no progress.

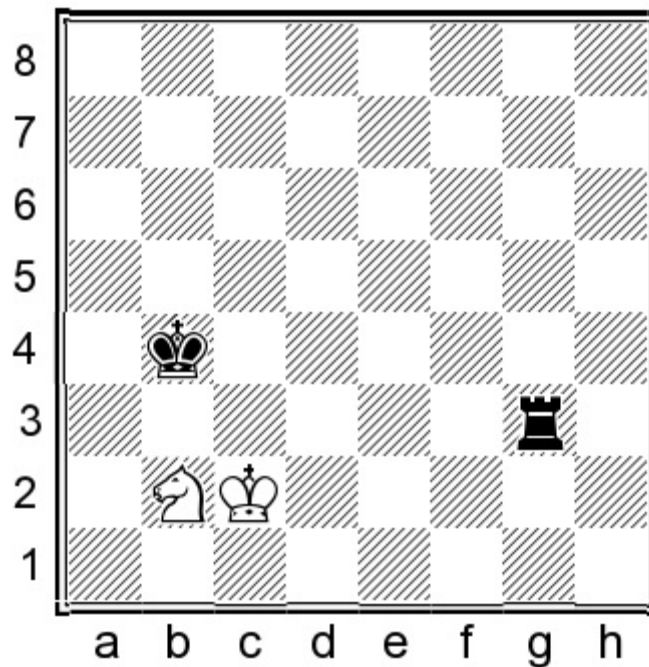
73.♔d6 ♞b6 74.♔c6 ♔b8 75.♔b5 ♔a7 76.♙g2 ♞c8 77.♙h3 ♞b6 78.♙e6 ♞a8 79.♙c4 ♞b6 80.♙e6 ♞a8 81.♔c6 ♔xa6 82.♙c8+ ♔a7 83.♙e6 ♔a6 84.♙c4+ ♔a7 85.b4 ♞b6 86.♙b3 ♞a8 87.b5 ♞b6 88.♙e6

1/2-1/2

Example 20

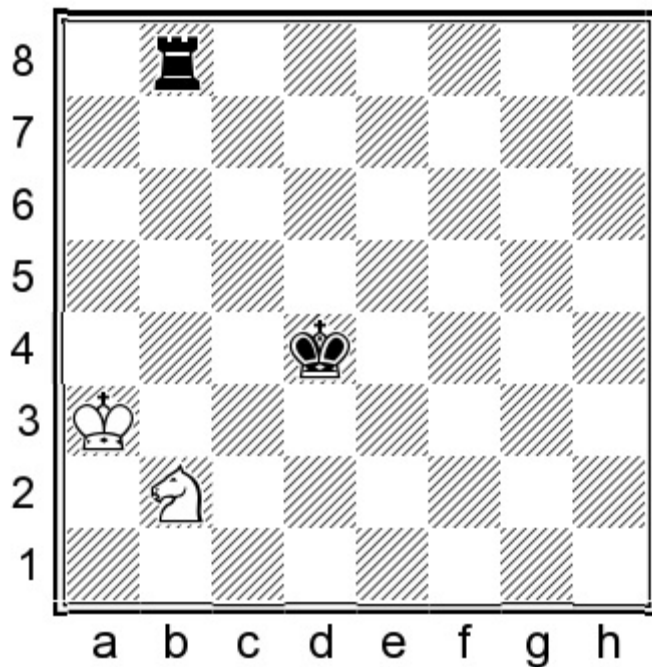
Rook versus knight

Girya – Khotenashvili, Geneva 2013



The endgame with rook vs. knight and no pawns is very much underestimated in the chess training process, and I would like to emphasize that things are far from simple! As a weaker side even top GMs have managed to lose it! It can also arise from a normal rook endgame, as you will see in the second example. If you ask anyone what he knows about this endgame, the answer will usually be the same: the knight must stay close to the king! And that's basically what everyone knows, but I'll show you that at one point the knight has to move away from the king! To start with, I will simulate what can happen in a game and show how you have to be very careful if your opponent pushes you to the edge of the board.

1. ♖d3+ ♜c4 2. ♗b2+ ♜d4 3. ♗d1 ♞h3 4. ♗b2 ♞h2+ 5. ♜b3 ♞g2 6. ♗c4 ♞g8 7. ♗b2 ♞c8 8. ♜b4 ♞b8+ 9. ♜a3

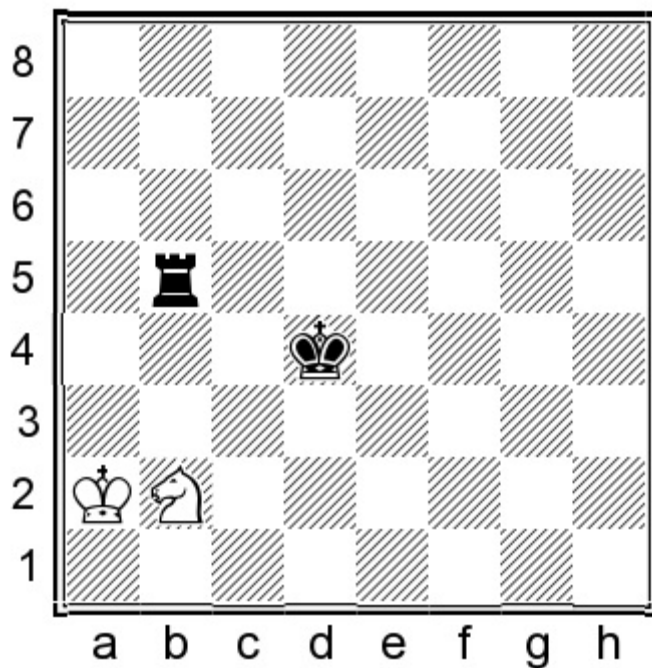


Position after: 9. ♜a3

Black has achieved his first goal: He has driven White's king to the edge of the board.

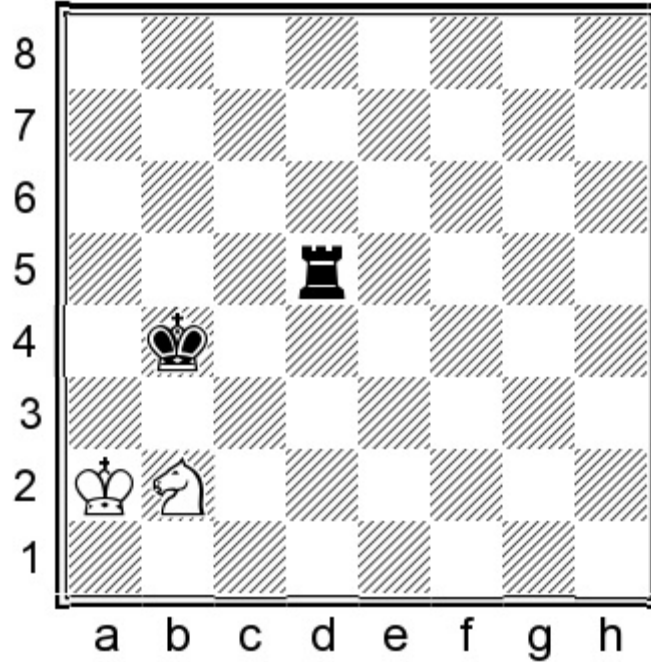
9... ♞b5 10. ♗a4

Losing is 10. ♜a2?



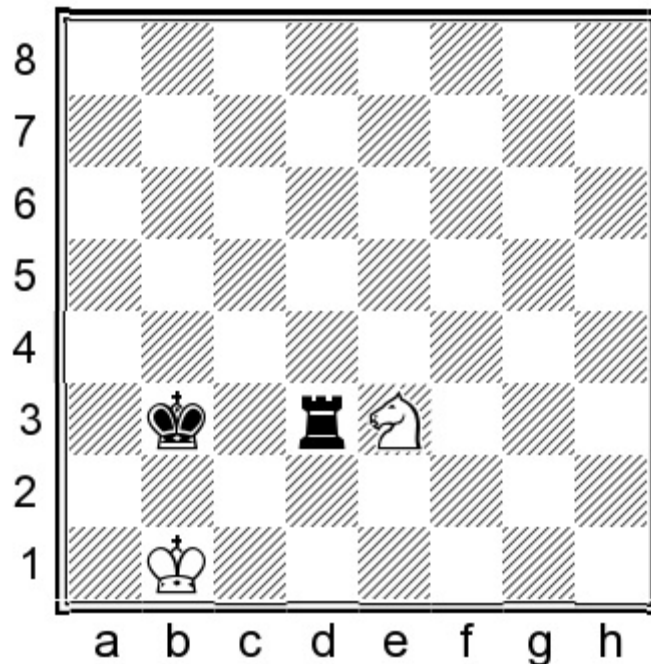
Position after: 10. ♔a2?

due to 10... ♖c3 11. ♘a4+ ♕b4 12. ♙b2 ♜d5!



Position after: 12... ♜d5!

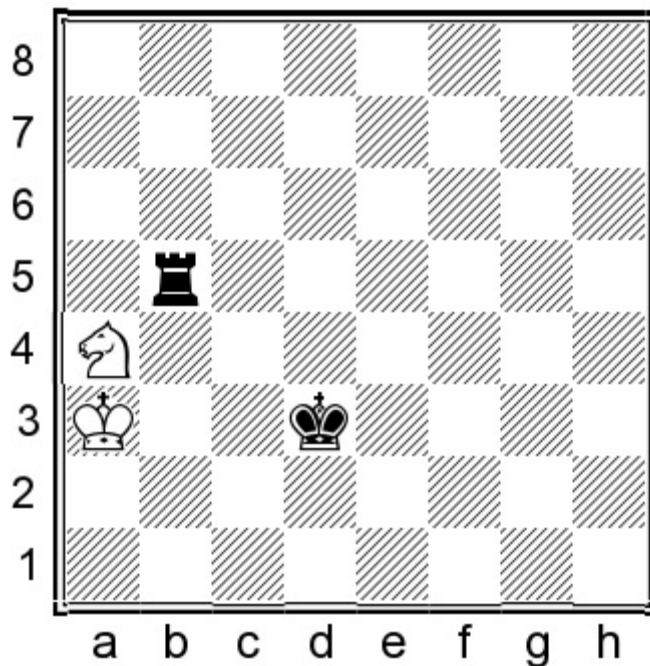
It's important to see how the rook restricts the knight! 13. ♔b1 ♕a3 14. ♘c4+ [14. ♔a1 ♕b3 15. ♔b1 ♜d2 and the knight falls] 14... ♕b3 15. ♘e3 ♜d3



Position after: 15... ♜d3

And again the knight is doomed.

10...♔d3



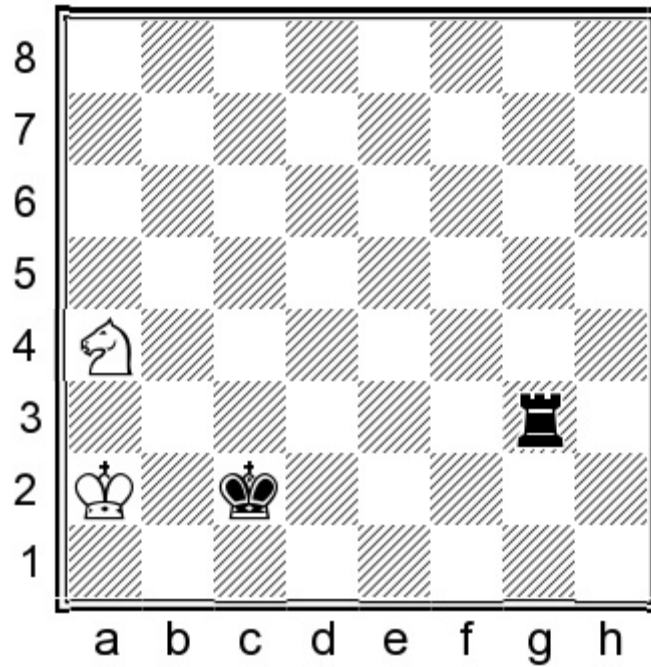
Position after: 10...♔d3

11.♘b2+

11.♔a2? loses due to 11...♔c4.

11...♔c2 12.♘a4 ♖b3+ 13.♔a2 ♖g3

This is the moment when the knight must leave the king, because now staying next to it means defeat!



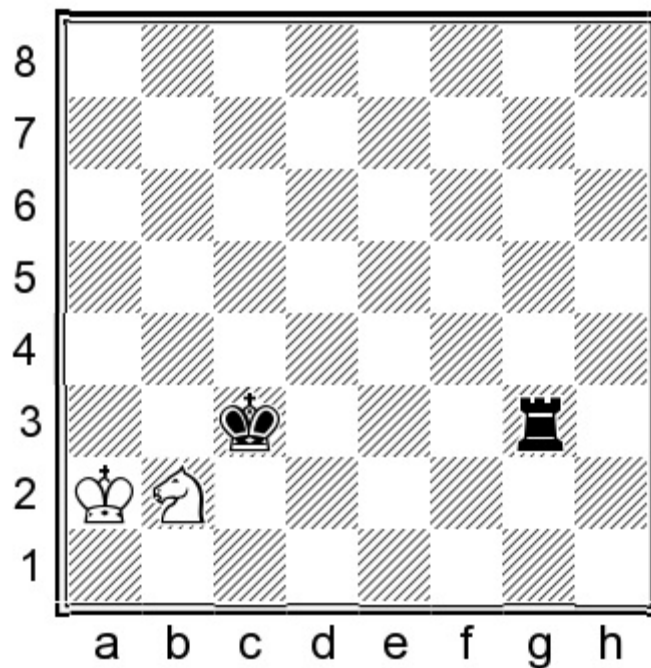
Position after: 13...Rg3

14. Nb2?

A) Best is 14. Nc5! Rg4 [14...Rf3 15. Na4] 15. Qa3 Qc3 16. Na4+ Qc2 [16...Qc4 17. Nb2+] 17. Nc5
And the game is drawn.

B) Also good is 14. Nb6, but it is better is to be a bit closer to the king.

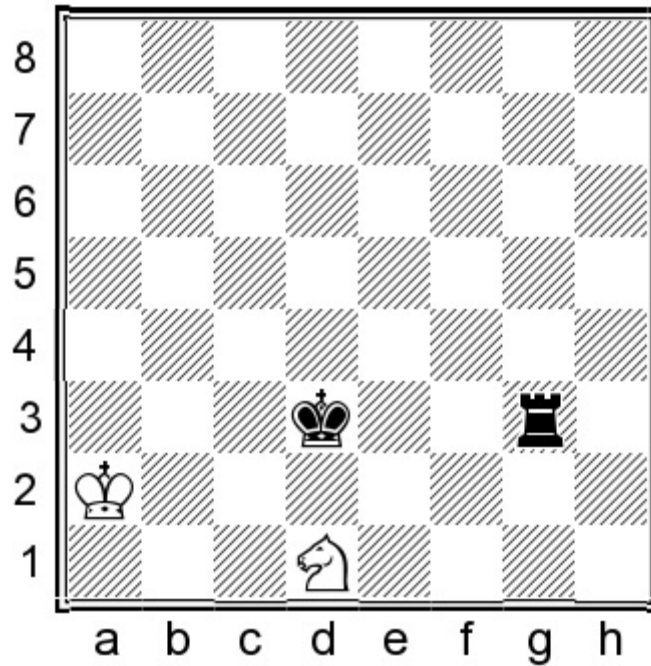
14... Qc3!



Position after: 14...♔c3!

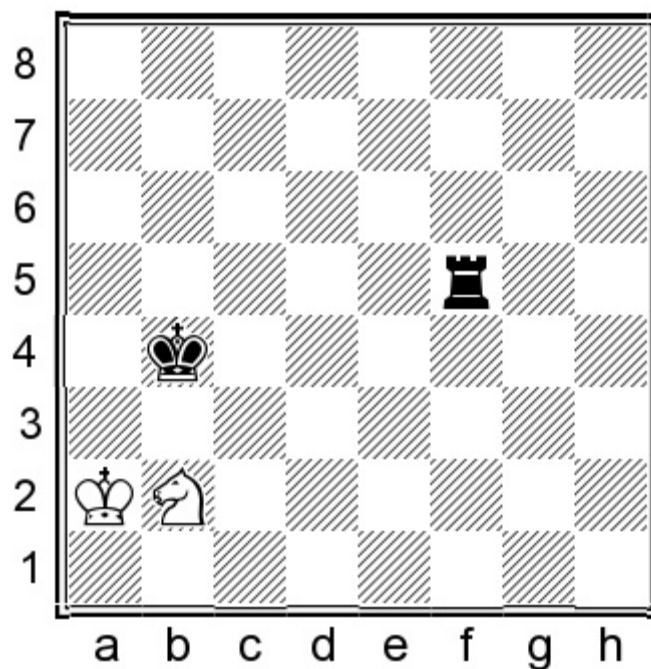
15.♘a3

A) 15.♘d1+ ♔d3



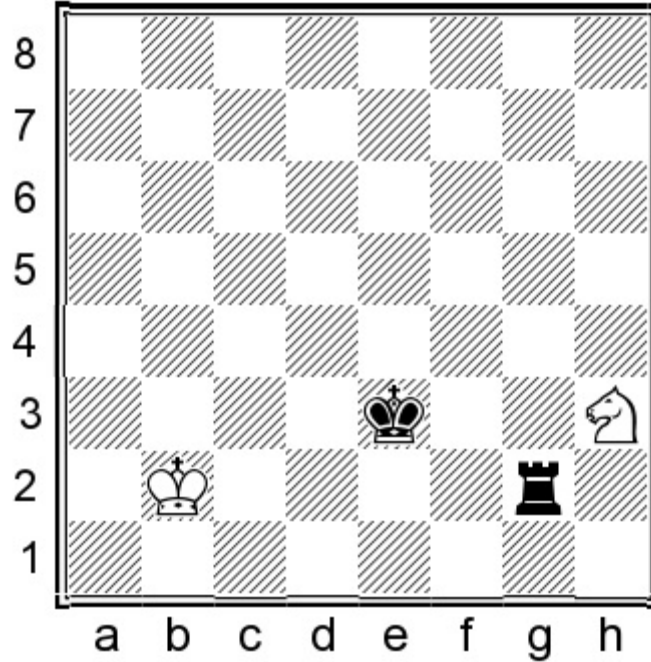
Position after: 15...♔d3

16.♔b2 [The knight is also lost in case of 16.♘b2+ ♔d4 17.♘d1 ♖g1 18.♘b2 ♔c3 19.♘a4+ ♔b4 20.♘b2 ♖f1 21.♘d3+ ♔c3 22.♘c5 ♖f5 23.♘a4+ ♔b4 24.♘b2



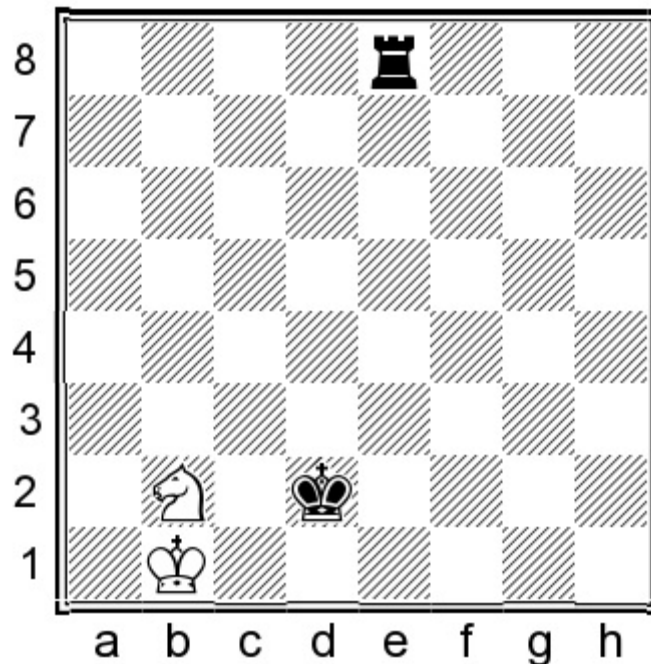
Position after: 24. ♖b2

24... ♜d5! 25. ♖b1 ♕a3] 16... ♕d2 17. ♗f2 ♞g2 18. ♗h3 ♕e3+



Position after: 18... ♕e3+

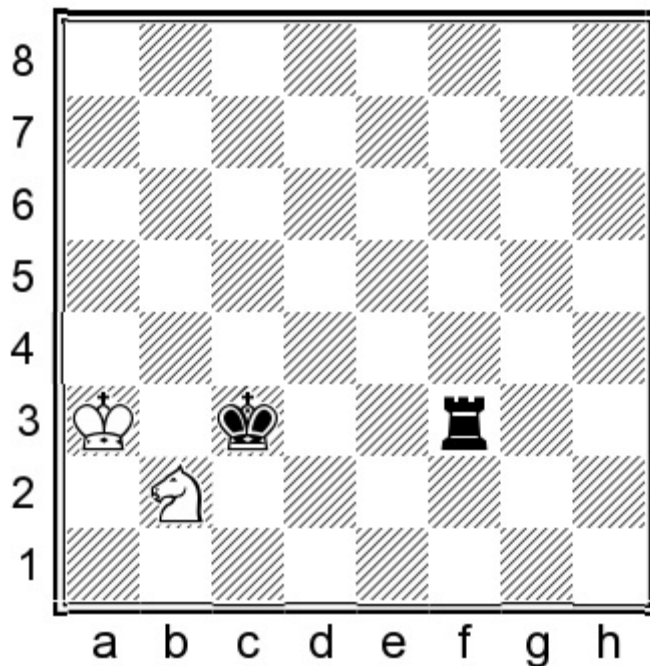
B) 15. ♗a4+ ♖b4 16. ♗b2 ♞a3+ 17. ♖b1 ♕c3 18. ♗d1+ ♕d2 19. ♗b2 ♞a8 20. ♗c4+ ♕c3 21. ♗e3 ♞e8 22. ♗d1+ ♕d2 23. ♗b2



Position after: 23. ♗b2

23...♖e4 24.♔a2 ♕c1 25.♘d3+ ♕c2 26.♘c5 ♖c4 And Black wins.

15...♖f3!



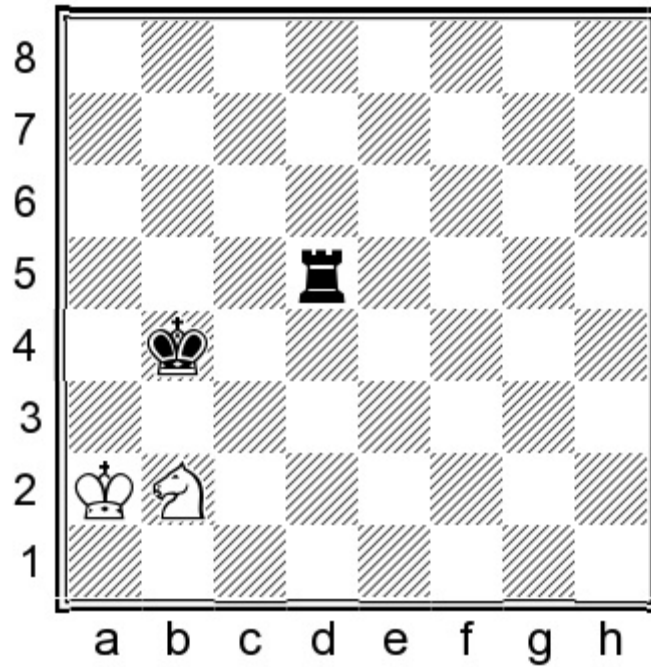
Position after: 15...♖f3!

16.♘a4+

16.♔a2 ♖f2 17.♔a1 ♕b3! And the knight will die.

16...♕c4+ 17.♔a2 ♕b4 18.♘b2 ♖f1 19.♘d3+ ♕c3 20.♘c5 ♖f5 21.♘a4+ ♕b4 22.♘b2 ♖d5

And again Black wins.

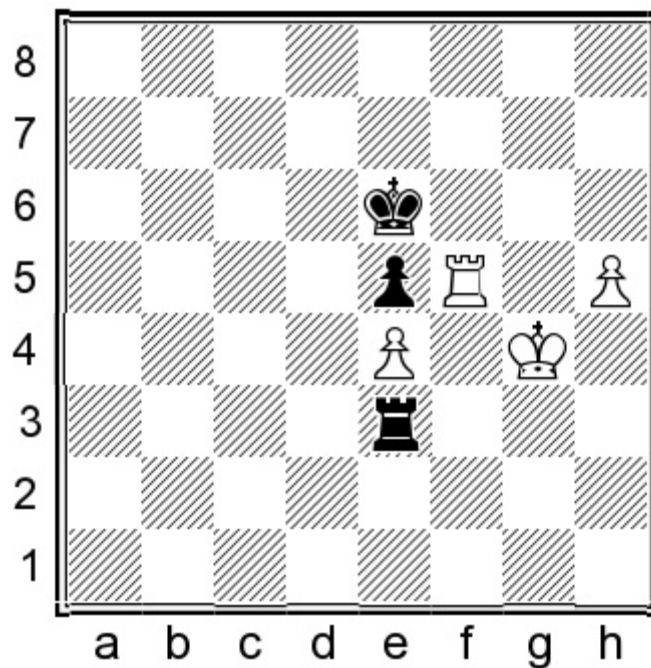


Position after: 22...♖d5

0-1

Example 21

From Kamsky – Bacrot
Sofia 2006

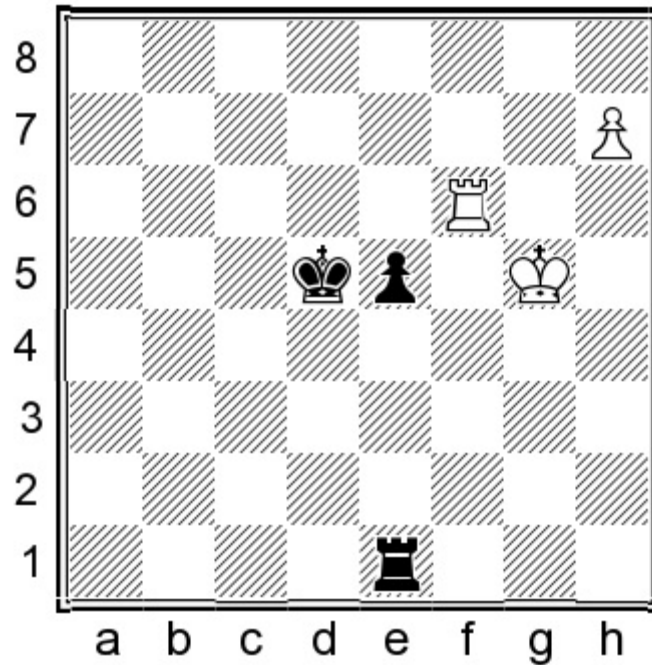


As I've mentioned, a rook vs. knight endgame can also arise from complicated rook endgames like this one.

59.h6 ♖xe4+ 60.♔g5 ♖e1 61.♗f6+!

Kamsky is preparing to build the bridge!

61...♕d5 62.h7

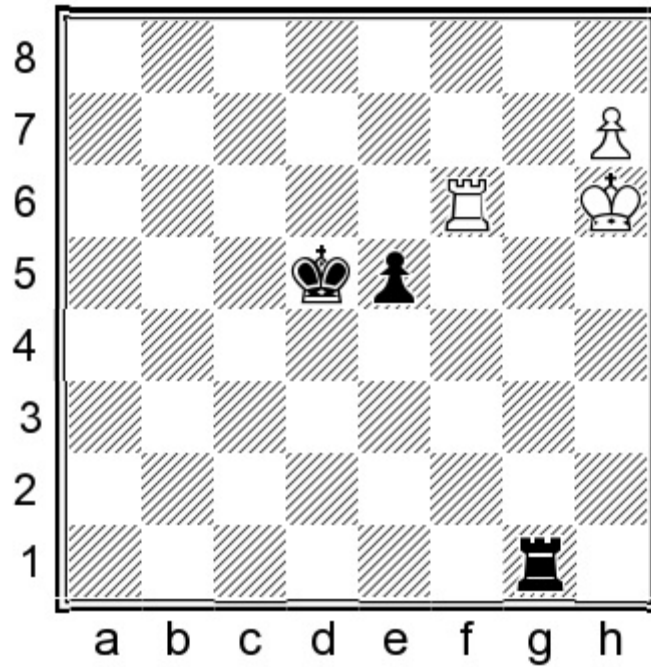


Position after: 62.h7

62...♗g1+!

62...♗h1 63.♗h6! and the bridge decides.

63.♔h6



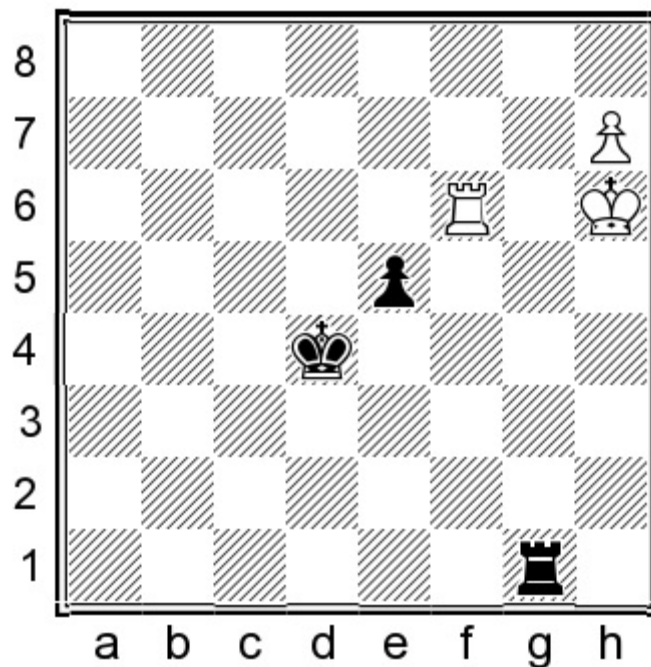
Position after: 63. ♔h6

63...♔e4!

Bacrot is defending brilliantly! All other moves lose now.

A) 63...e4 64. ♖f5+! and again the bridge decides.

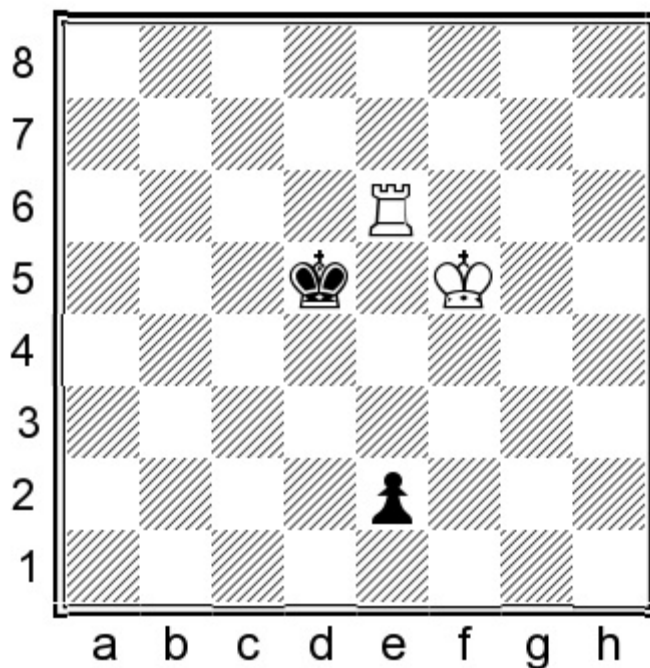
B) 63...♔d4



Position after: 63...♔d4

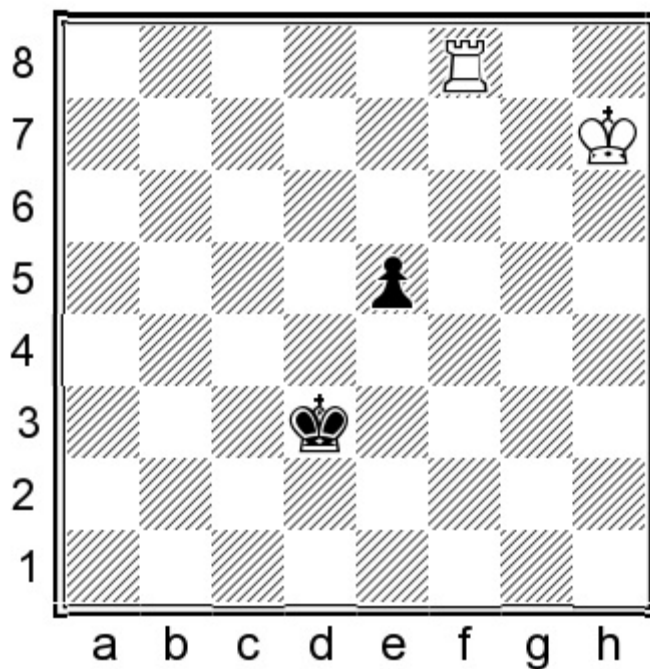
64.♖f5 and again the bridge is built [and there is even the move 64.♖f4+! exf4 65.h8=♔+].

C) 63...♖h1+ 64.♔g7 ♖xh7+ 65.♔xh7 e4 66.♔g6 e3 67.♔f5 e2 68.♖e6 And White wins.



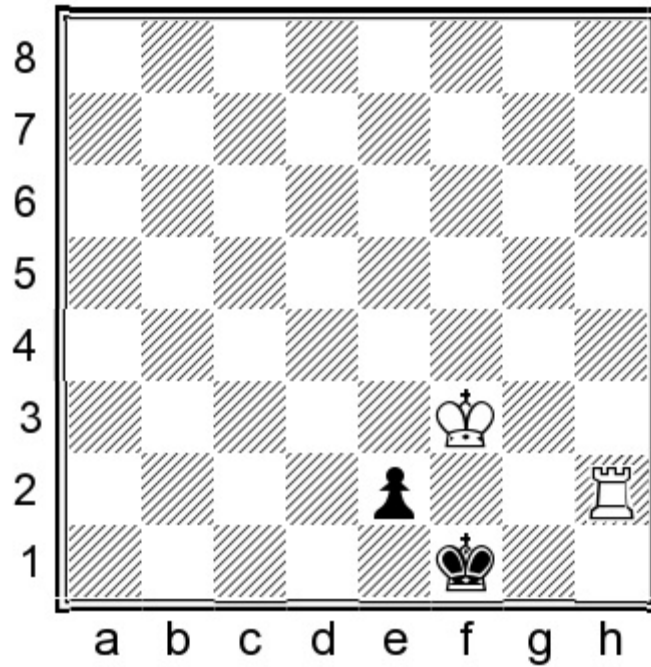
Position after: 68.♖e6

64.♖f8 ♖h1+ 65.♔g6 ♖xh7 66.♔xh7 ♔d3



Position after: 66...♔d3

67.♖d8+ ♔e3 68.♔g6 e4 69.♔f5 ♔f3 70.♖h8 e3 71.♖h3+ ♔f2 72.♔f4 e2 73.♖h2+ ♔f1 74.♔f3



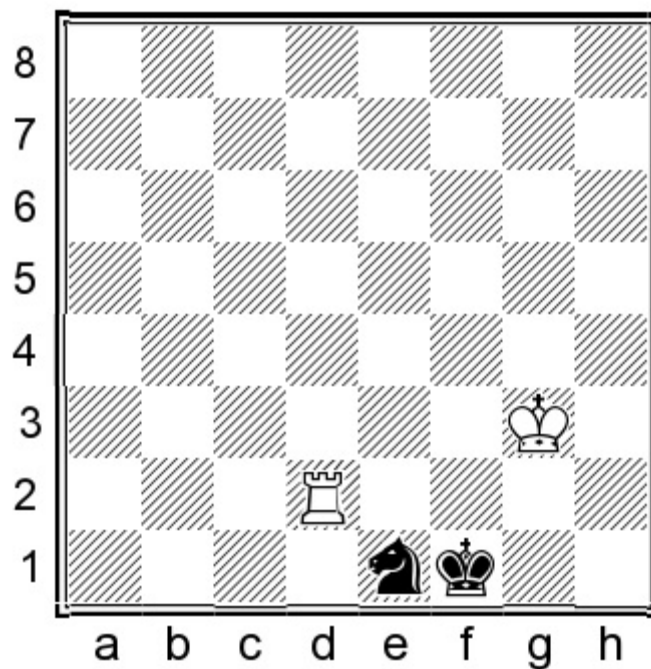
Position after: 74. ♔f3

74...e1=♖+!

The only move to prevent a mate.

The problem for the weaker side when a pawn promoted to a knight is that the king is unfavorably placed on the edge of the board.

75. ♕g3 ♖d3 76. ♚d2 ♖e1

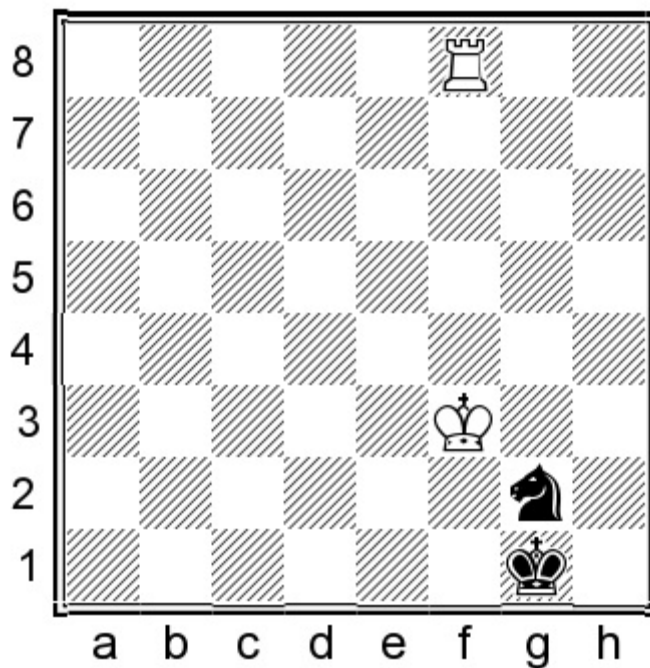


Position after: 76...♖e1

77.♜f2+!

This maneuver is a real test for the defense!

77...♔g1 78.♜f8 ♜g2 79.♔f3

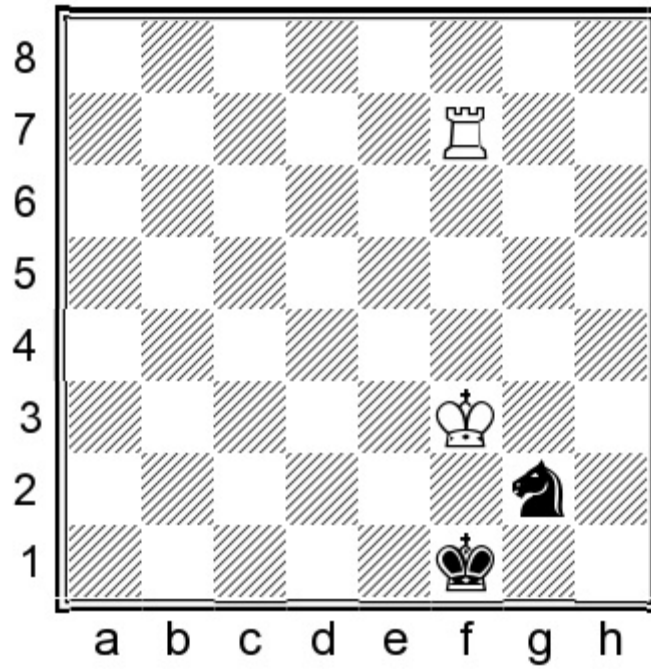


Position after: 79.♔f3

79...♔f1?

79...♜h4+! is the only defense!

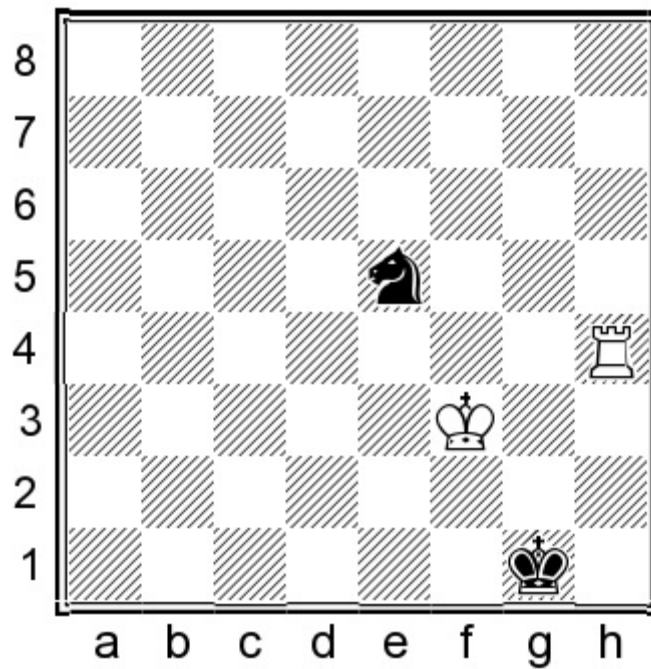
80.♔g3+ ♔g1 81.♔f3 ♔f1 82.♜f7!



Position after: 82. ♖f7!

Kamsky now finds a winning path.

82... ♜e1+ 83. ♕e3+ ♜g1 84. ♕e2 ♜g2 85. ♖h7 ♜f4+ 86. ♕f3 ♜d3 87. ♖h4 ♜e5+



Position after: 87... ♜e5+

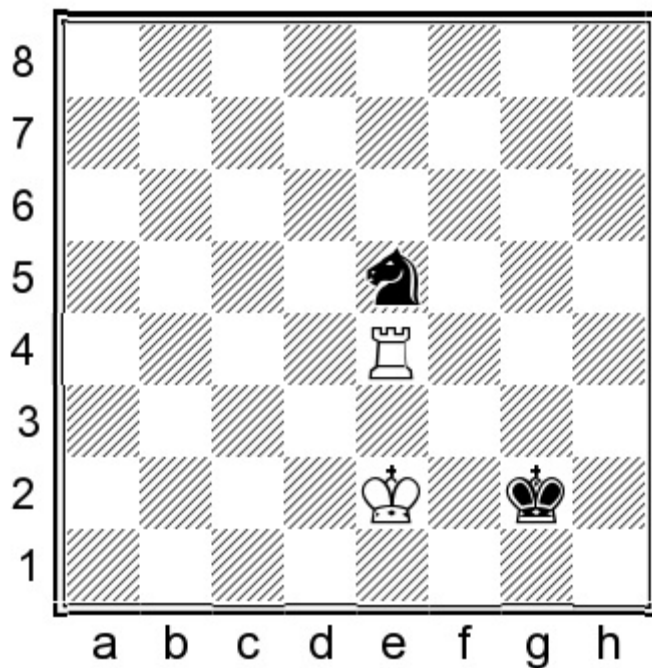
88. ♕e2

Winning is 88.♔e3! ♔g2 89.♖e4!.

88...♔g2!

Now it's again a draw.

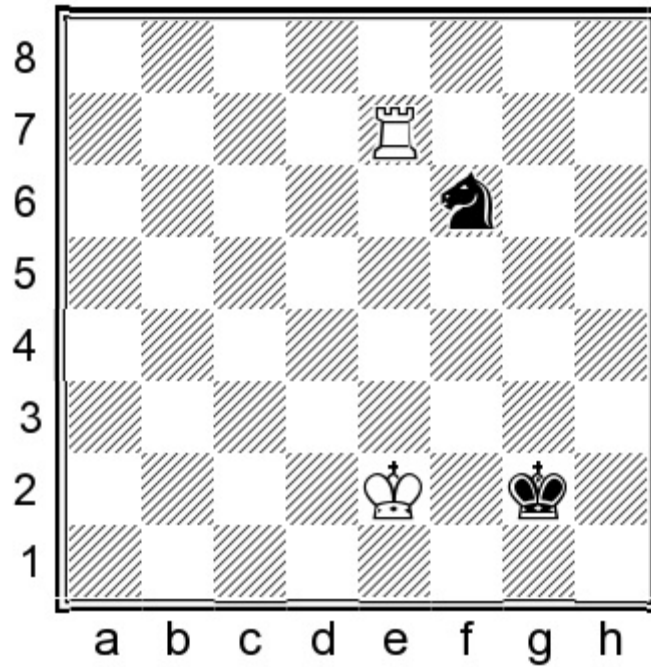
89.♖e4



Position after: 89.♖e4

89...♘f7

89...♘d7! This is the only move, but it's very hard for humans to find it during a game; only computers can do that! 90.♖e7 ♘f6!



Position after: 90... Nf6!

The idea of the defense is to get the knight back to the king. 91. Rg7+ Kh3 92. Kf3 Nh5=

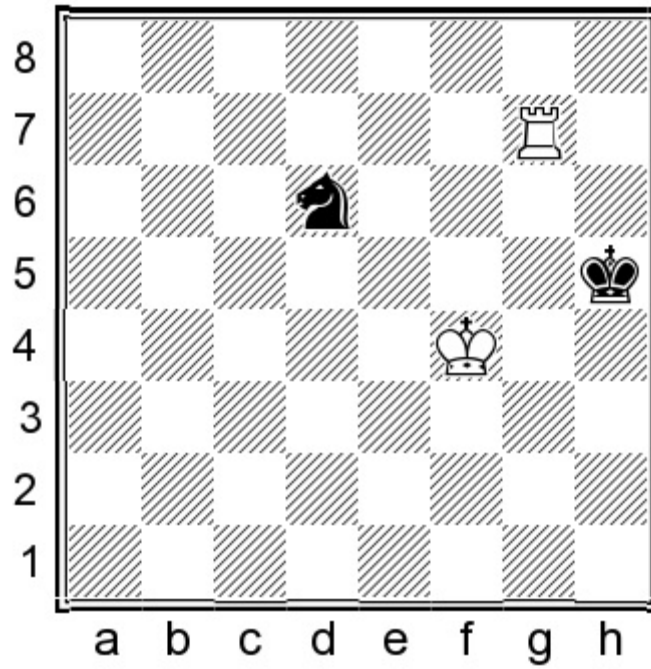
90. Re7!

Now the knight can no longer return to the king.

90... Nd6

90... Nh6 91. Rg7+ Kh3 92. Rh7

91. Rg7+ Kh3 92. Kf3 Kh4 93. Kf4 Kh5

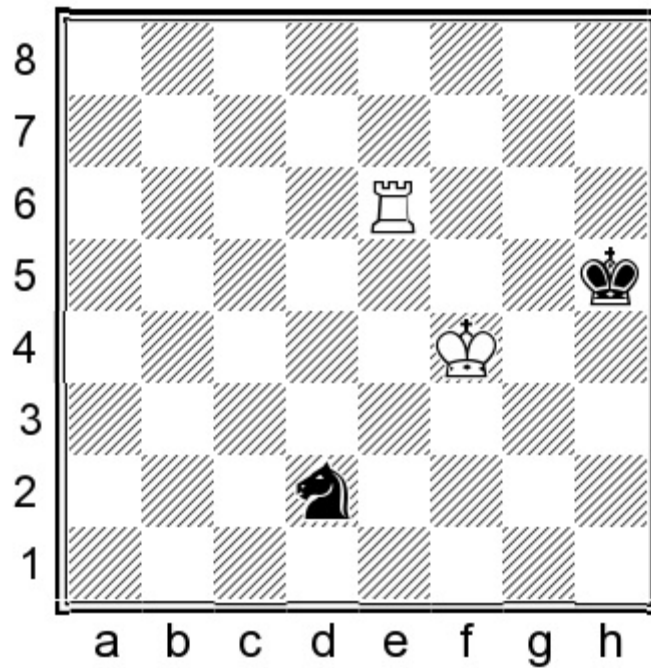


Position after: 93...♔h5

94.♖e7

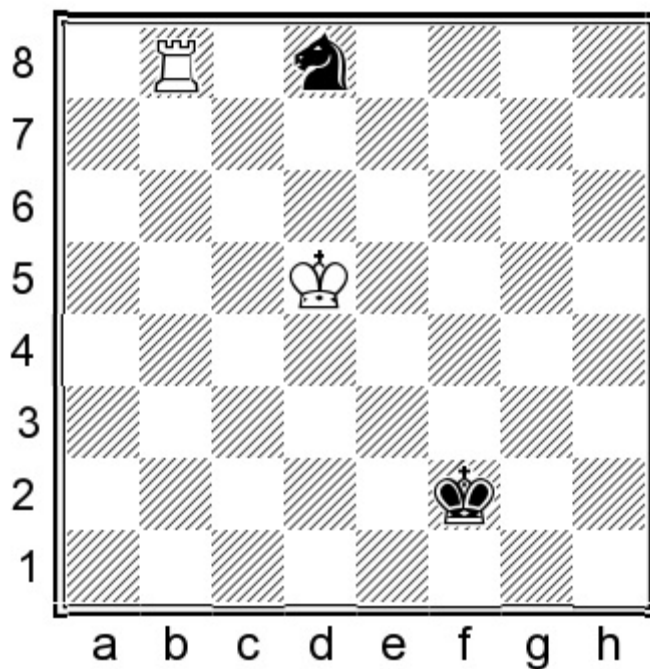
The quicker win was 94.♖c7!

94...♘c4 95.♖e6 ♘d2



Position after: 95...♘d2

96.♞c6 ♖b3 97.♙e3 ♜g4 98.♞c4+ ♜g3 99.♞c3 ♖a5 100.♙e4+ ♜f2 101.♙d5 ♖b7 102.♞b3 ♖d8
103.♞b8



Position after: 103.♞b8

And the knight has finally fallen.

If the world's top GMs have not managed to find their way in this endgame, and made a lot of mistakes, then you surely know that this endgame is definitely not to be underestimated and it should be taken very seriously!

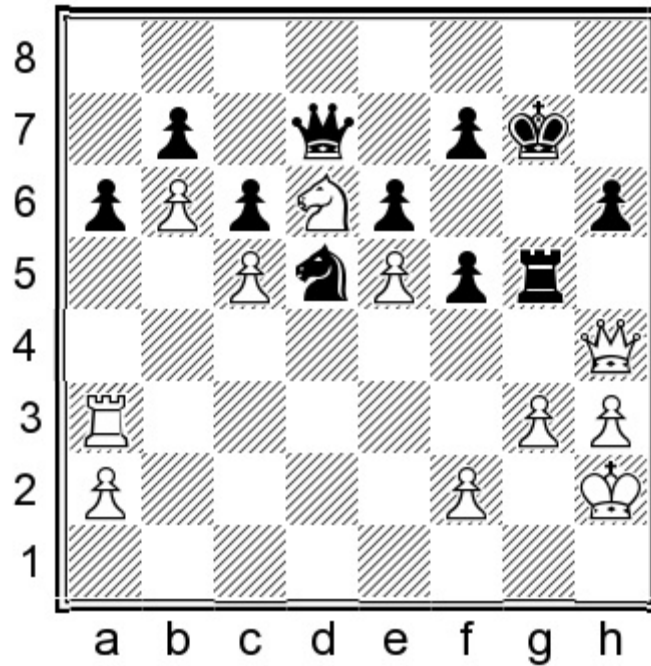
1-0

Chapter 4

Knight geometry

Example 1

From Zvjaginsev – Schwarz
Novi Sad 2016



Knight geometry is a very powerful weapon in combination with other factors, such as a far-advanced pawn in this case. Remember, when a pawn is just one or two squares from promotion to a queen, miracles can happen!

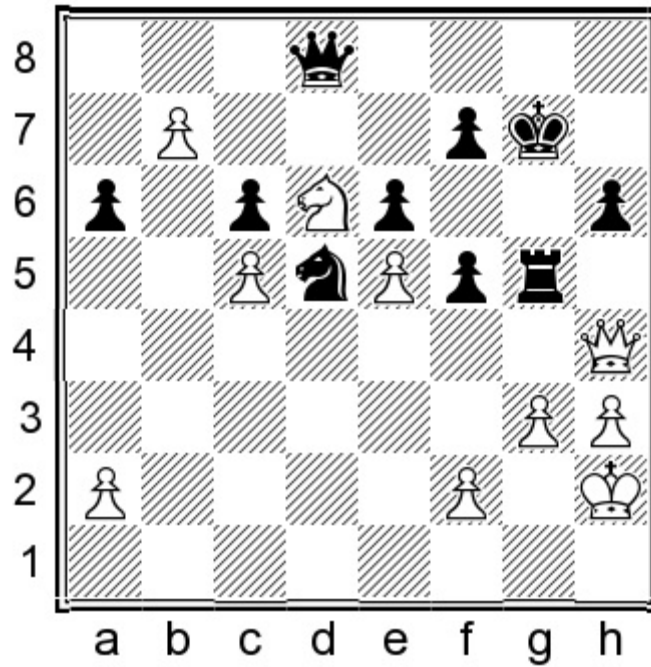
44. ♖xa6!! bxa6 45. b7

The pawn threatens to queen and Black can only defend against that from two squares, c7 or d8.

45... ♔d8

45... ♖c7 46. ♘e8+! Knight geometry!

It looks like everything is alright for Black, but now follows a lesson in knight geometry!



Position after: 45... ♕d8

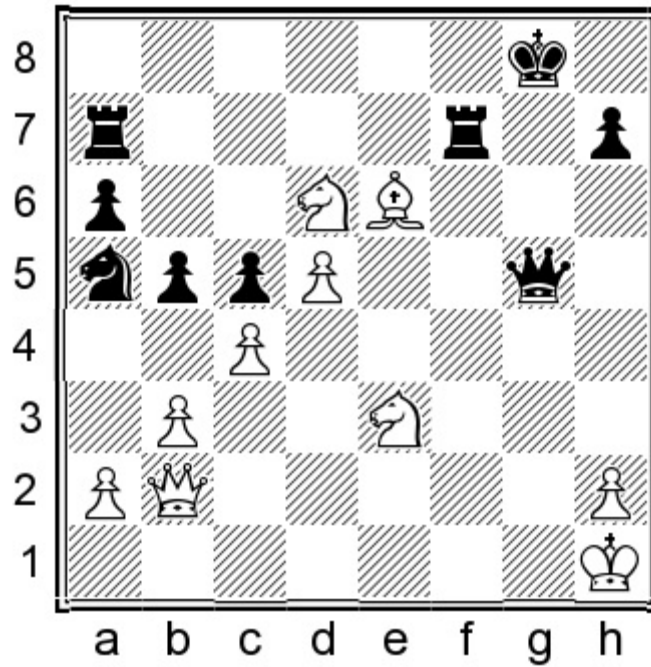
46. ♕xh6+!! ♔xh6 47. ♖xf7+ ♔h7 48. ♖xd8

And on the next move the pawn puts on the crown of the queen.

1-0

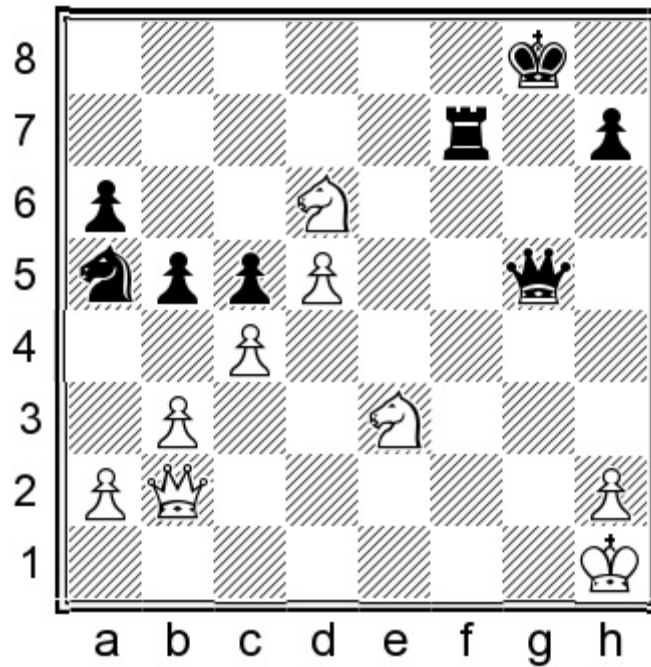
Example 2

From Petrosian – Spassky
Moscow 1966



Petrosian has seen a tactical motif well in an advance!

29. ♕xf7+ ♖xf7



Position after: 29... ♖xf7

30. ♖h8+!!

That's the motif for setting up the knight geometry!

30. ♘xf7 ♔xf7 is the position that Spassky wanted to go for.

30...♔xh8 31.♘xf7+ ♔g7 32.♘xg5

And White was a piece up!

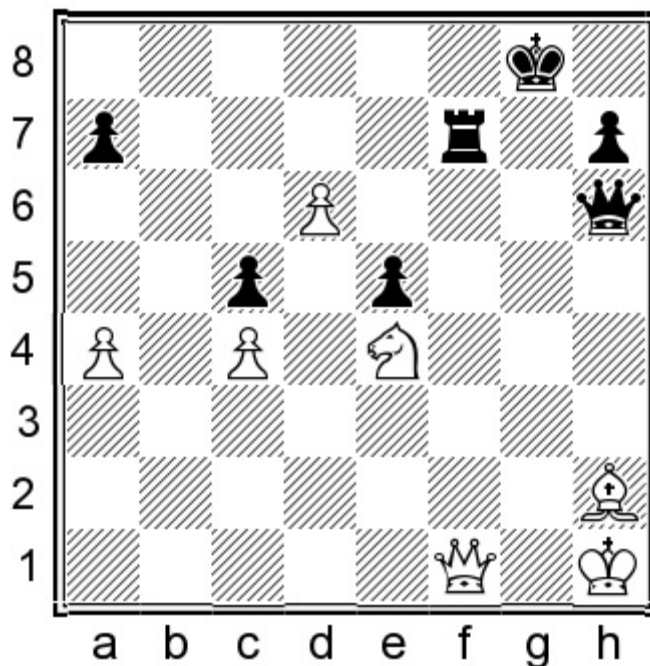
1-0

Example 3

From Petrosian – Simagin

Moscow 1956

That was a familiar motif for Petrosian since 10 years earlier he had executed it in a more complicated way in this game.



42.♙g2+!

This forces Black to declare himself and I am sure that at this moment Petrosian has already seen the final combination.

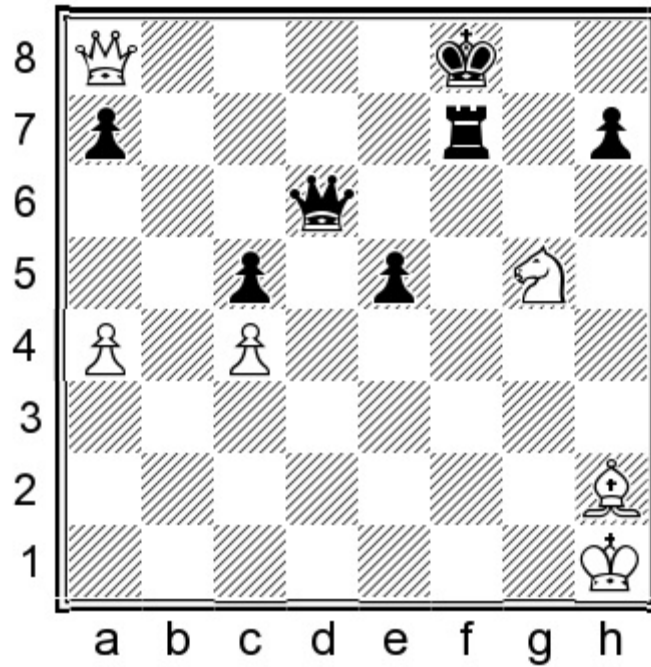
42...♔f8

42...♖g7 43.d7! is the important point by which White exploits the pin to promote the pawn!

43.♘g5 ♙xd6!

Simagin finds the last straw of salvation, connected with perpetual check.

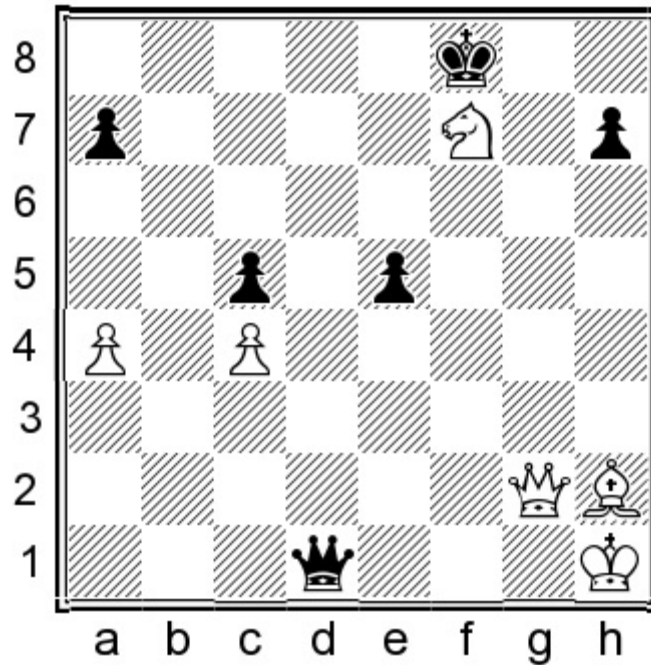
44.♙a8+!



Position after: 44. ♔a8+!

However, now comes an important finesse!

The greedy 44. ♘xf7? would be a mistake due to 44... ♔d1+!



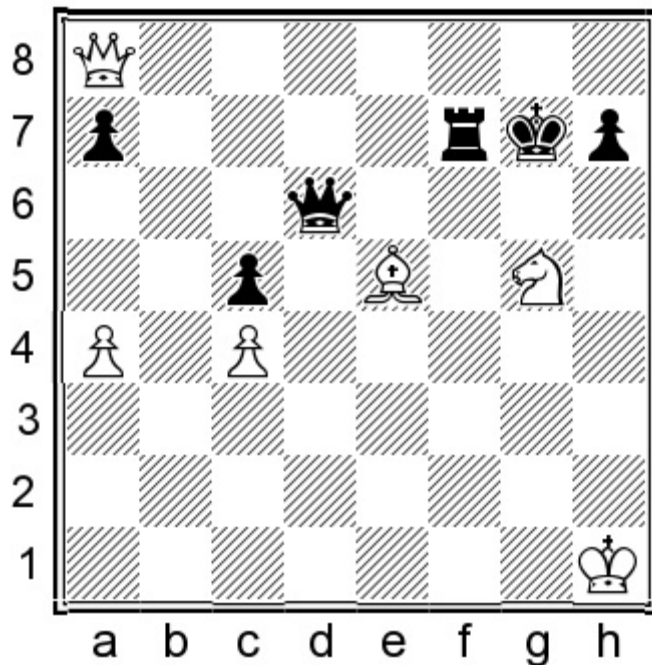
Position after: 44... ♔d1+!

and suddenly White is unable to avoid the perpetual. 45. ♔g1 ♔f3+ 46. ♔g2 ♔d1+ 47. ♔g1 ♔h5+ 48. ♔h2 [48. ♔h2 ♔f3+] 48... ♔d1+ And White has to settle for a draw.

44...♔g7

44...♔e7 45.♙xa7+ And White wins the rook without allowing a perpetual.

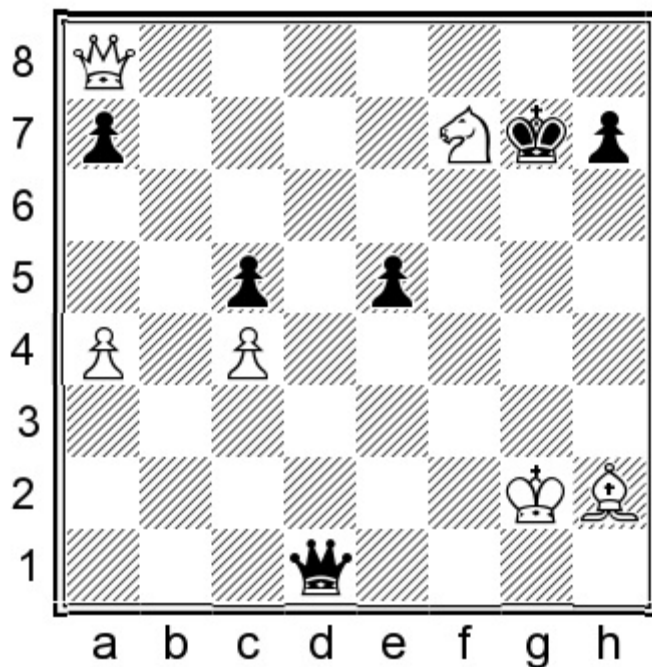
45.♕xe5+!!



Position after: 45.♕xe5+!!

Dragging the queen to the important e5-square!

A) 45.♘xf7 ♚d1+ 46.♔g2

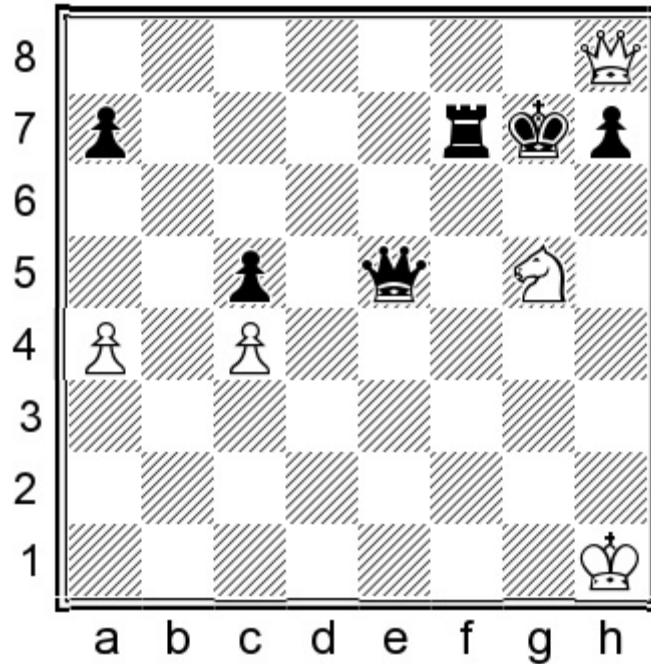


Position after: 46. ♔g2

This also wins since there is no longer a perpetual check, but Petrosian prefers to proceed with his idea. 46... ♖e2+ 47. ♔g3 ♖e1+ 48. ♔h3 ♖e3+ [48... ♖f1+ 49. ♖g2+] 49. ♕g3

B) Premature is 45. ♖h8+? due to 45... ♔g6! and the black king escapes.

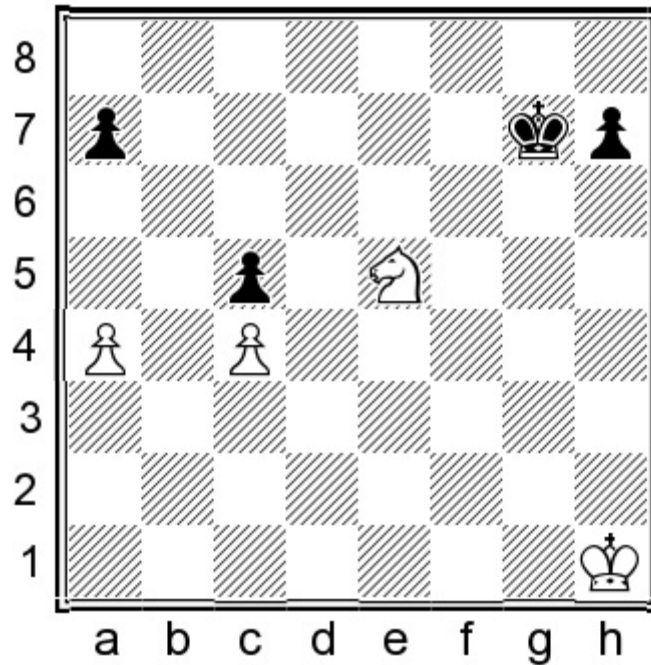
45... ♖xe5 46. ♖h8+!!



Position after: 46. ♖h8+!!

Now the black king has no choice but to take the queen, allowing a display of knight geometry!

46... ♔xh8 47. ♗xf7+ ♔g7 48. ♗xe5



Position after: 48. ♖xe5

White comes out a piece up and will easily collect Black's pawns on the queenside.

48...♔f6 49.♘d7+ ♔e6 50.♘xc5+ ♔d6 51.♘d3 ♔c6 52.♔h2 ♔d6 53.♔h3

And now the h-pawn will fall as well.

1-0

Example 4

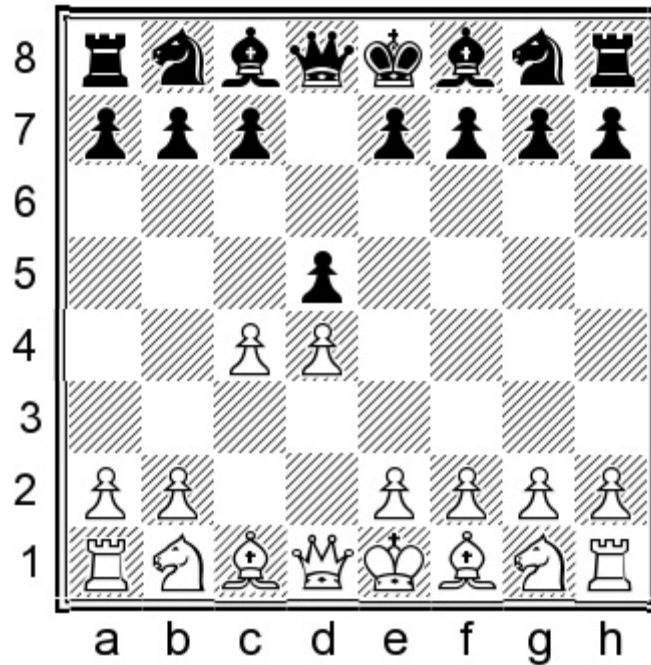
From Marovic – Tsagan
Krakow 1964

The opening and the middlegame of this game were very interesting, so I'll try to explain the players' ideas from the beginning.

1.d4

An introduction to the closed games, which for a long time were considered more strategic (positional) in nature. However, with the development of new ideas, in modern times the closed games have become almost as sharp (tactical) as the open games that arise after the move 1.e4.

1...d5 2.c4



Position after: 2.c4

The Queen's Gambit. White sacrifices his queenside pawn for development in the center. While in former times players offering to sacrifice the pawn were entering an adventure, today the way in which White regains the pawn is well known. So today it's far from being a real gambit.

2...e6

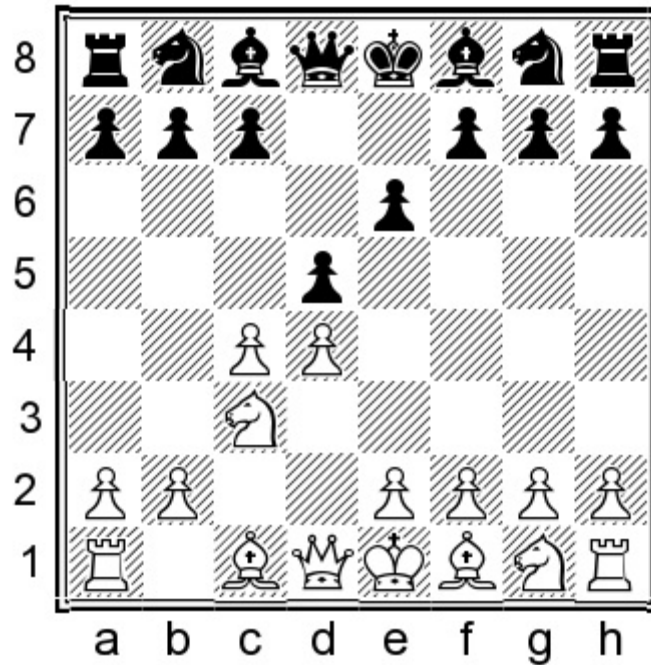
Black refuses to accept the gambit and brings support to his d-pawn.

A) In case of 2...dxc4 White usually reacts with 3.e4 [or 3.e3].

B) Bad is 2...♘f6 since after 3.cxd5 ♘xd5 4.e4 White grabs space in the center without the usual fight when Black tries to prevent it.

C) 2...c6 is another form of support for the d5-pawn, called the Slav. This way Black does not block the development of his c8-bishop.

3.♘c3!



Position after: 3. ♞c3!

The old rule of the former World Champion Jose Raul Capablanca: in the opening you should develop your knights first and then bishops.

3... ♞f6 4. ♕g5

A developing move that is also a pin should always be placed high on the priority list.

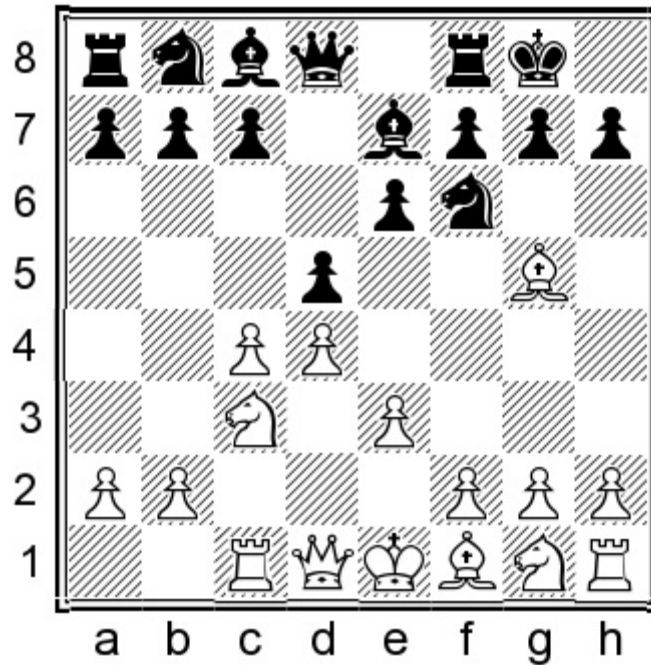
4... ♖e7

Black opposes the white bishop so that, at the appropriate moment, the knight could move, allowing the bishops to be exchanged.

5.e3

Once White's dark-squared bishop has found an active place, this pawn is now being pushed to clear the way for White's light-squared bishop.

5... 0-0 6. ♖c1



Position after: 6. Rxc1

This move is already an opening finesse.

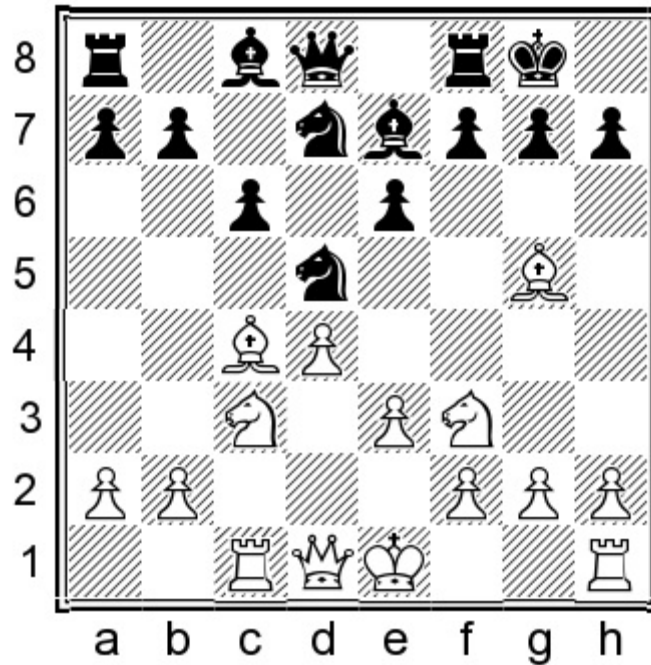
A more logical move right now would be 6. Nf3. However, with the development of his rook White wants to prepare for events on the c-file, if Black wants to open the position by exchanging central pawns.

6... Nbd7 7. Nf3 c6 8. Qd3 dxc4

Why is Black only now taking on c4 and not before? The answer is: White would like to recapture the pawn with his bishop in one move from the f1-square,

so this way White has lost time (one tempo) by playing the move Qd3. So that's why Black is only now taking the c4-pawn.

9. Qxc4 Nd5



Position after: 9...♞d5

Black has a bit less space, so by exchanging pieces he wants to reduce that disadvantage. An important tip: when you have more space, avoid exchanges, but when you are constricted try to exchange pieces. To make it clearer, let's say that you are confined with a lot of people in a small room. Isn't it easier for you when one person leaves the room? You will surely agree. Likewise, when you attack from a lot of space, try not to let the opponent "leave the room"!

10.♙xe7 ♜xe7 11.0-0 ♞xc3 12.♖xc3

12.bxc3 is another option, but White wanted to have a rook on the third rank to use for an eventual attack on the kingside.

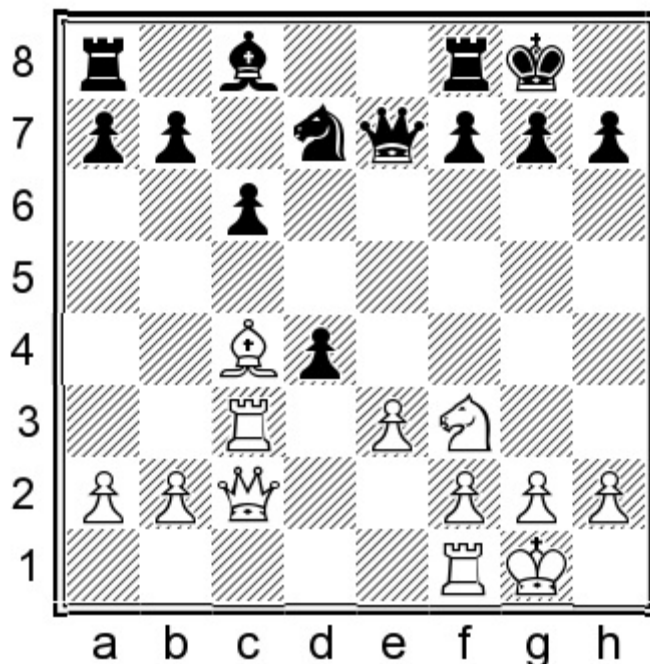
12...e5

Black was restricted to the last three ranks, so he finally seizes the opportunity to open his position a little.

13.♙c2

13.dxe5 ♞xe5 14.♞xe5 ♜xe5 would lead to even more exchanges, which is what Black wants.

13...exd4



Position after: 13...exd4

Although White can recapture with the knight, he now voluntarily creates an isolated pawn on d4. The isolated pawn offers certain dynamic benefits that must be exploited by active play and good placement of the pieces. With each exchange, the strength of the isolated pawn reduces, especially after the exchange of queens. In the endgame the pawn becomes an object of attack since it is not supported by other pawns.

With the queens on board, at the right time White may be able to advance and exchange the isolated pawn, increasing the activity of the pieces around it. So for the side fighting against an isolated pawn, the old Nimzowitsch rule is very important: “An isolated pawn is a dangerous criminal who should be controlled and not even accidentally allowed to move!”

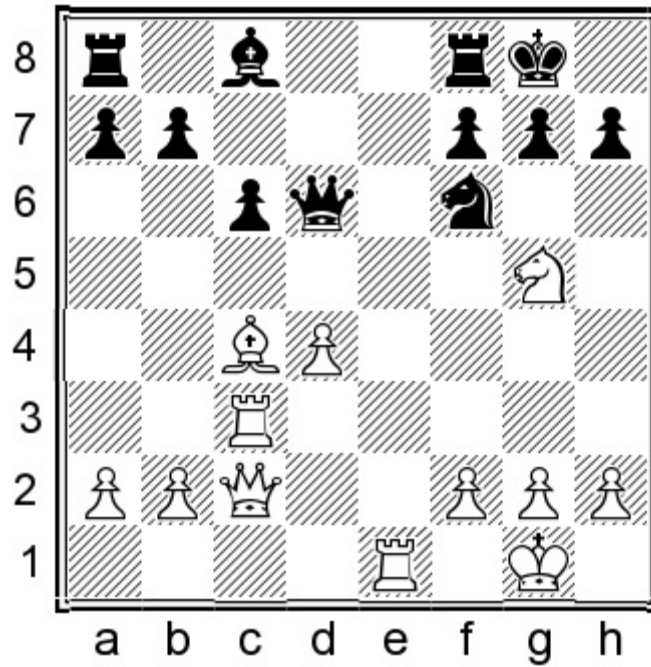
In accordance with this rule, it is important to place a blockading piece in front of an isolated pawn as soon as possible. The best piece for that is a knight, because besides blocking, it is positioned for attacks as it controls a lot of squares. A bishop is a weaker blockader, since it can be restricted or bypassed by playing on squares of the opposite color. If only the heavy pieces remain on the board then a queen or a rook can become good blockaders and so can the king in the endgame.

In addition to opening the center, Black could have played 13...e4 14.♘d2 ♖f6, when the position would be more closed and more strategic.

14.exd4 ♗f6?

Black wants to block the pawn according to the Nimzowitsch rule, but he does it in the wrong way. It was the right time to play 14...♘b6! since after 15.♖e1 ♔d8! the black queen controls the g5-square, so White cannot play ♗g5 as in the game.

15.♖e1 ♔d6 16.♗g5!



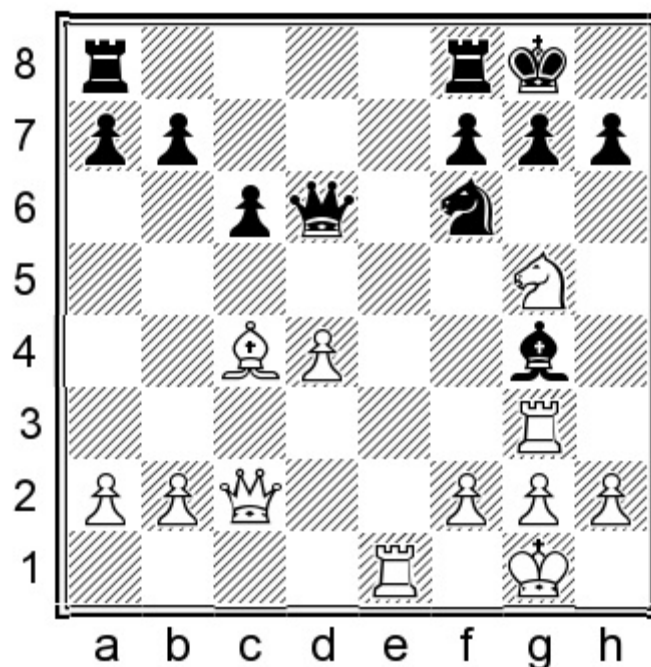
Position after: 16. ♖g5!

Now it's very unpleasant for Black since all the white pieces are active, which is very important, as I have mentioned, for the side that has an isolated pawn.

16... ♗g4

16... g6! was a better defense, although even in this case White keeps the advantage after 17. ♕b3.

17. ♖g3

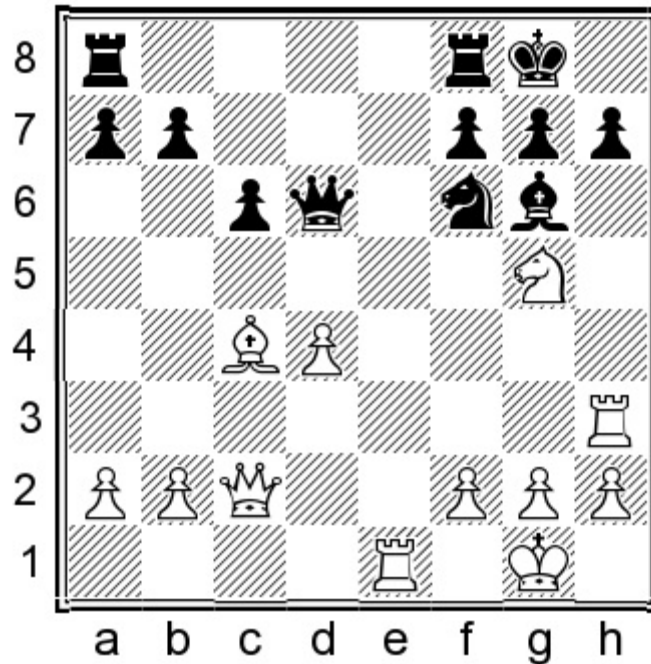


Position after: 17. ♖g3

Transferring a rook over the third rank is called “rook lift” and is an important attacking option in isolated pawn positions. Usually, the rook is activated via the a3-square after a pawn move to a4, but it is also possible to do it by ♖e1-e3 or, as in the game, ♖c1-c3.

But there was a simpler solution here: 17. ♕xf7+! (or ♘xf7!) 17... ♖xf7 18. ♘xf7 ♔xf7 19. ♖b3+ ♔f8 20. ♖xb7 and White will win another pawn.

17... ♕h5 18. ♖h3 ♕g6?



Position after: 18... ♕g6?

Black makes a mistake, overlooking White’s combination, one that is important to learn. Knight geometry!

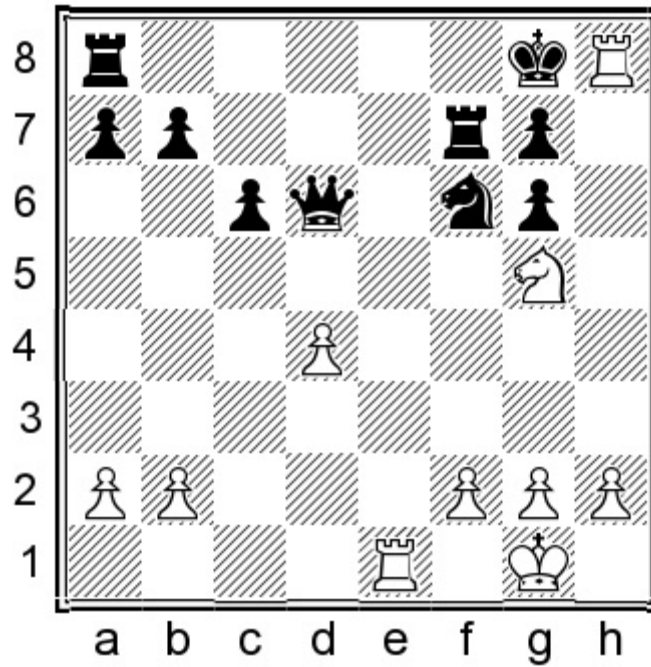
If Black knew about the combination, he would have surely played first 18... ♖b4 and only then retreated the bishop.

19. ♖xg6!!

You should examine every capture!

19... hxg6 20. ♕xf7+! ♖xf7 21. ♖h8+!!

Setting up the knight geometry.

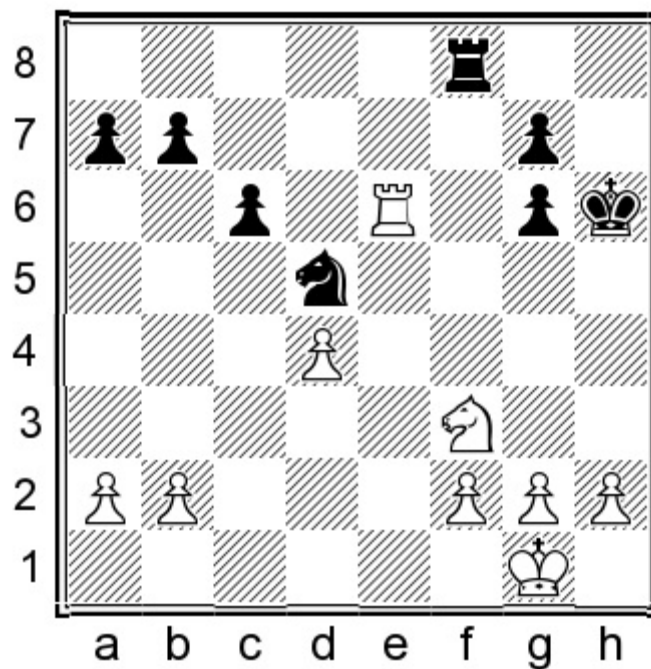


Position after: 21. ♖h8+!!

21...♔xh8 22.♘xf7+ ♔h7 23.♘xd6

After the smoke has cleared, you can see that White has won a pawn with his “petite combinaison”.

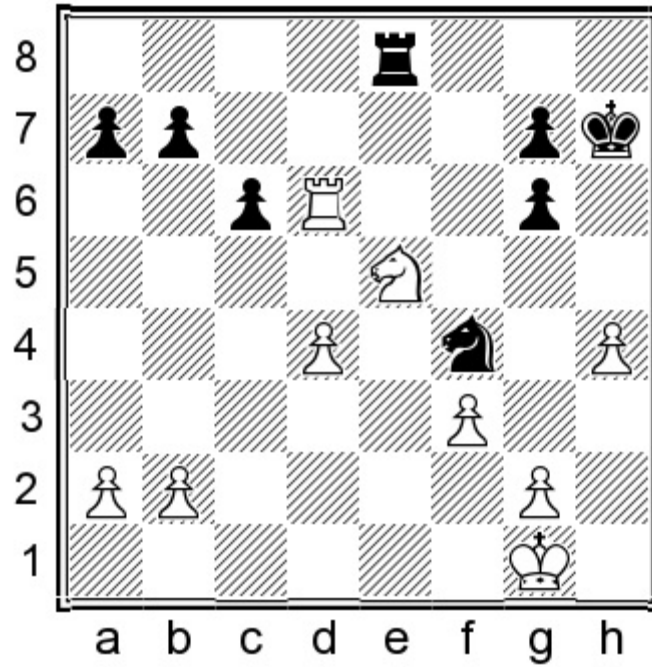
23...♞d8 24.♞e6 ♘d5 25.♘f7 ♞f8 26.♘g5+ ♔h6 27.♘f3



Position after: 27. ♘f3

White is a pawn up and Black has doubled g-pawns, which creates additional problems for him.

27...♖f4 28.h4 ♜f8 29.♗e5 ♘f4 30.♞d6 ♔h7 31.f3 ♜e8

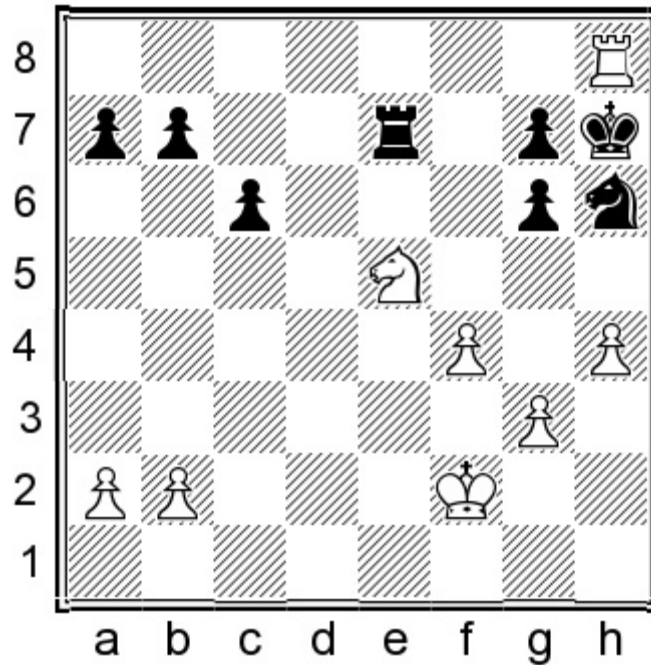


Position after: 31...♜e8

32.g3! ♘e2+ 33.♔f2 ♘xd4 34.f4 ♘f5 35.♞d7 ♜e7 36.♞d8 ♘h6

White once again gets the chance to use the knight geometry!

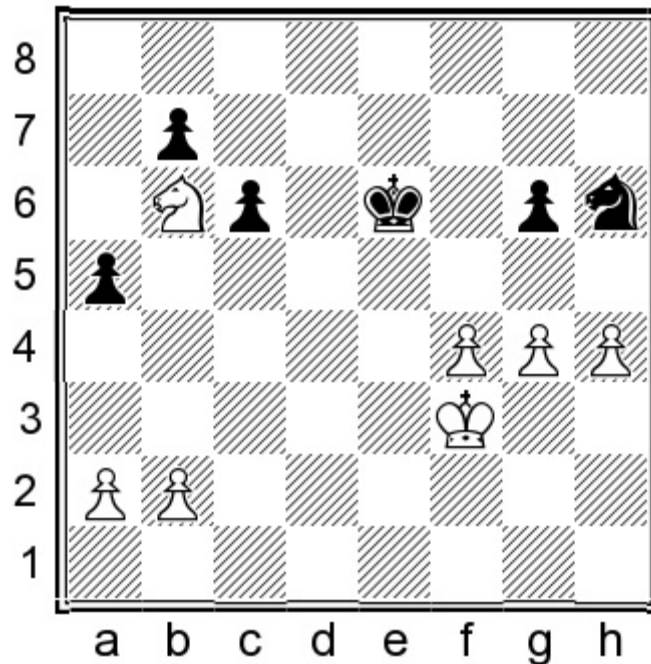
37.♞h8+!



Position after: 37. ♖h8+!

37... ♜xh8 38. ♘xg6+ ♔g8 39. ♙xe7+ ♕f7 40. ♚c8 ♖e6 41. ♜f3 a5 42. ♘b6 g6 43. g4

White has three against one on the kingside while on the queenside it's hard for Black to start rolling his majority. So it does not require difficult technique for White to convert his advantage.

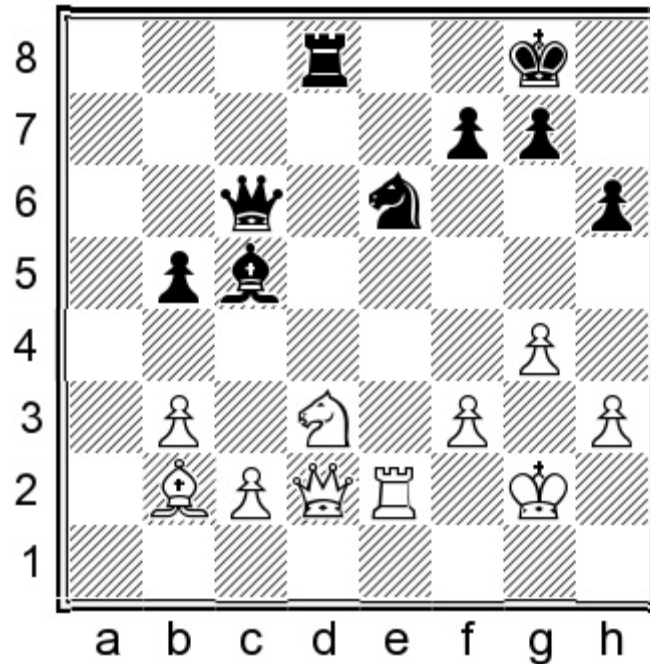


Position after: 43. g4

43... ♜f7 44. ♘c4 a4 45. ♜e4 ♘h6 46. ♙e5 c5 47. g5 ♚f5 48. ♘xg6 ♘d6+ 49. ♜f3 ♘c4 50. h5 ♘d2+ 51. ♜e2

Example 5

From Ibarra Jerez – Stella
Lorca 2014

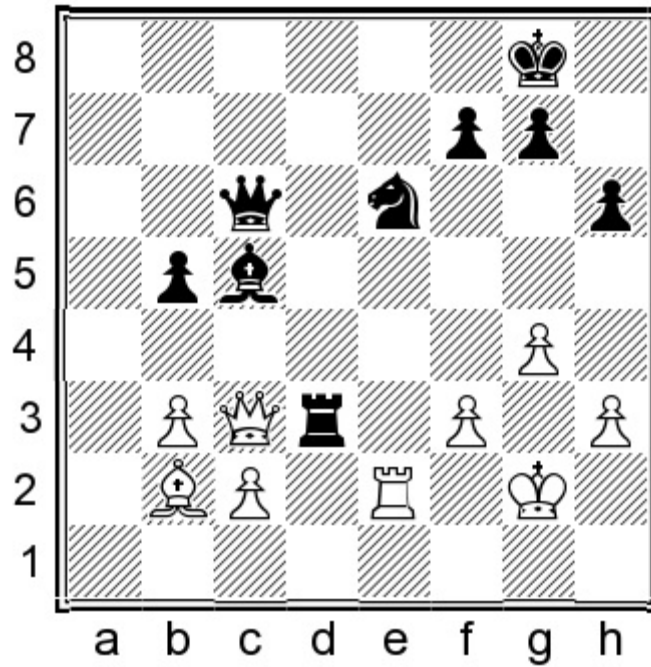


Knight geometry may be obvious, but sometimes the opponent needs to be drawn to the square where the geometry will occur. White played carelessly here.

35. ♔c3?

Now Black brilliantly seizes the opportunity to exploit knight geometry!

35... ♖xd3!!

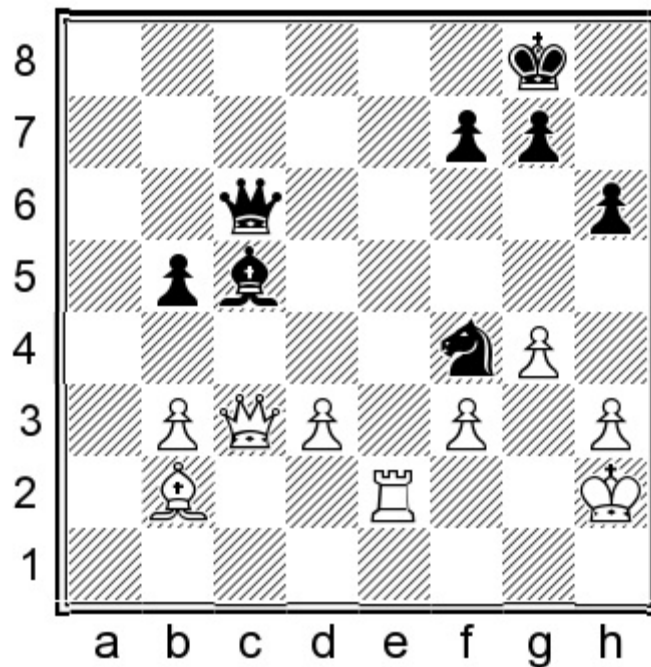


Position after: 35... ♖xd3!!

36.cxd3

36. ♔xd3?? is of course disastrous knight geometry for the white queen: 36... ♘f4+.

36... ♘f4+ 37. ♔h2

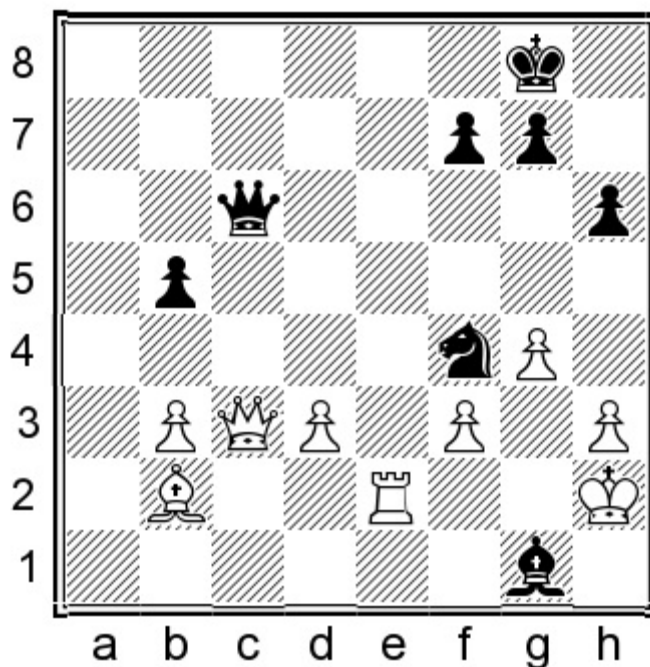


Position after: 37. ♔h2

37. ♔f1 ♚xf3+ leads to a quick mate.

White was counting on this position when moving his queen, thinking that the mate threat on g7 which he has created with the ♖b2-♚c3 battery would guarantee him a win here. But Black saw one move further!

37... ♗g1+!!



Position after: 37... ♗g1+!!

Dragging the white king into the knight geometry!

38. ♔xg1

A) The same goes for 38. ♔g3 ♘xe2+.

B) 38. ♔h1 ♚xf3+

38... ♘xe2+ 39. ♔f1 ♘xc3

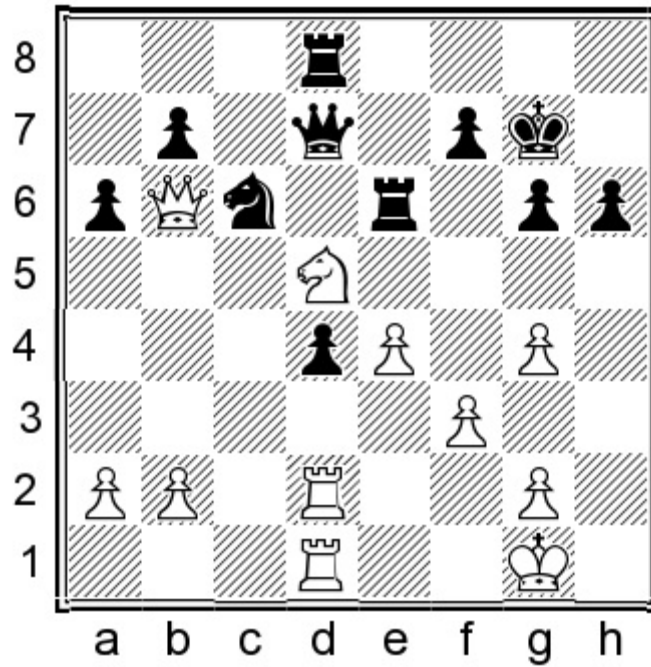
And the white queen is lost.

0-1

Example 6

From Vitiugov – Sasikiran

Doha 2015

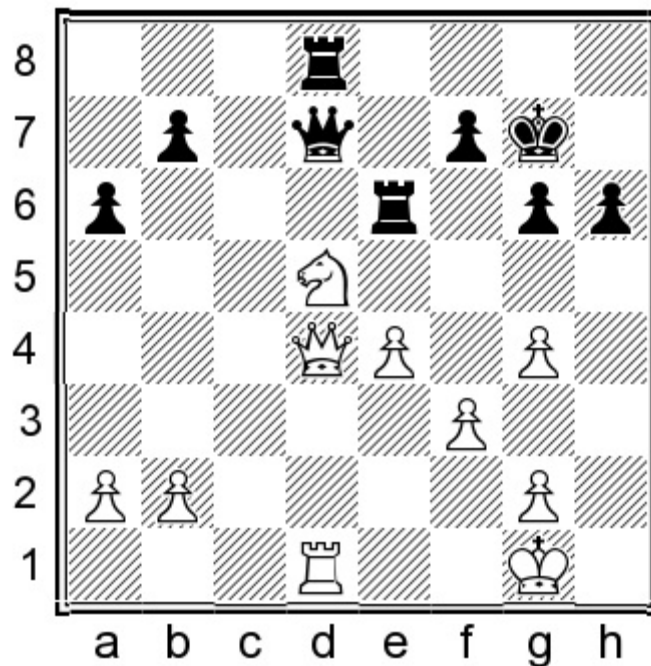


In the following game, everything was in the spirit of the knight geometry, which top grandmaster Nikita Vitiugov nicely exploited to gain the advantage. Here is an important combination of the knight geometry and unprotected piece motif.

27. ♖xd4!

The black position is very solid and without this sacrifice it would be difficult to break through.

27... ♘xd4 28. ♕xd4+



Position after: 28. ♕xd4+

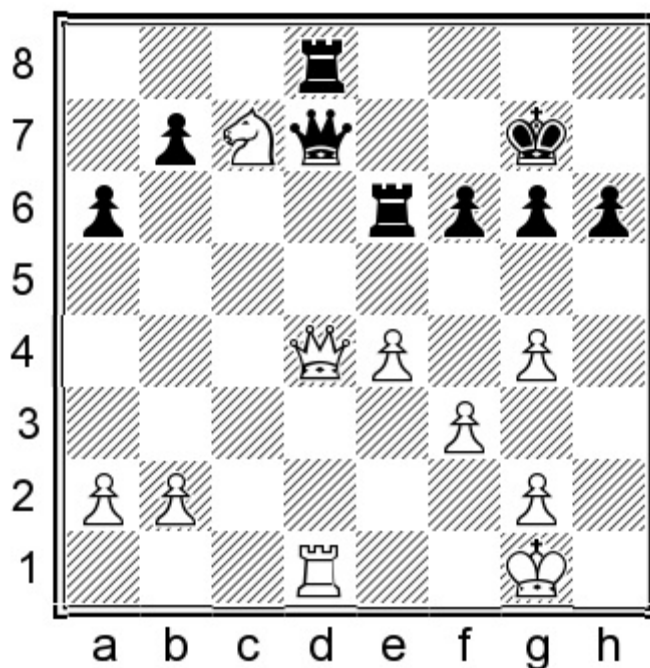
28...f6

Sasikiran tries to avoid the knight geometry but fails to do so because of the next move.

A) White easily gets an advantage in case of 28...♔g8 29.♘f6+.

B) And of course even worse is 28...♔f8 29.♙h8#.

29.♘c7!!



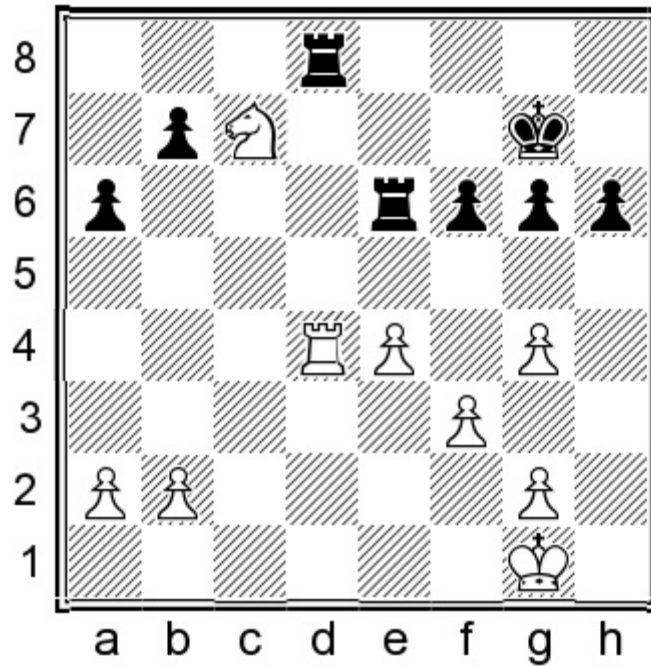
Position after: 29.♘c7!!

Suddenly White regains the material with interest, no matter how Black reacts.

An unsuccessful attempt at knight geometry is 29.♘f4? since after 29...♙xd4+ [29...♙d6 is also fine for Black] 30.♙xd4 ♙ed6 31.♙xd6 ♙xd6 the knight is not able to reach e8.

29...♙e7

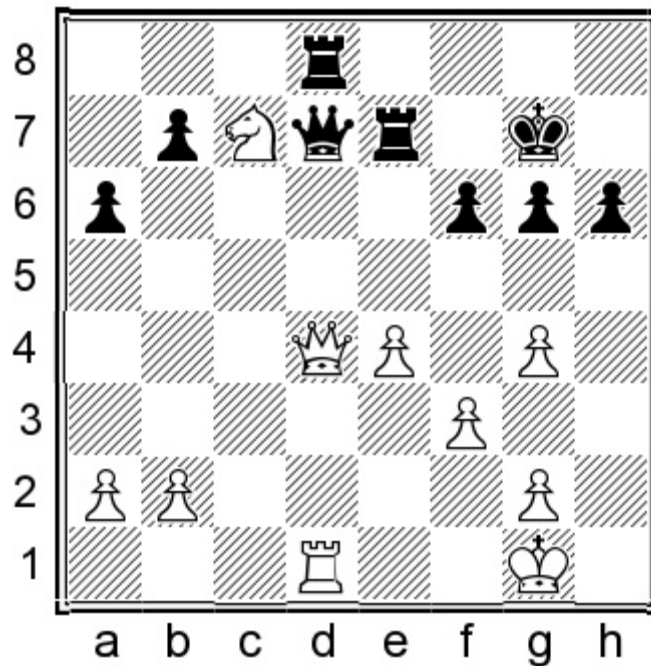
A) Now 29...♙xd4+ is no good any more due to 30.♙xd4



Position after: 30. ♖xd4

and suddenly the white knight wins one of the black rooks. 30... ♖xd4 [or 30... ♖ed6 31. ♖xd6 ♖xd6 32. ♗e8+] 31. ♗xe6+

B) 29... ♕xc7 30. ♕xd8 ♕xd8 31. ♖xd8



Position after: 29... ♖e7

30. ♗e8+!

Deflecting one of Black's defensive pieces.

Also good is 30.♘e6+.

30...♙xe8

30...♖exe8 31.♙xd7+

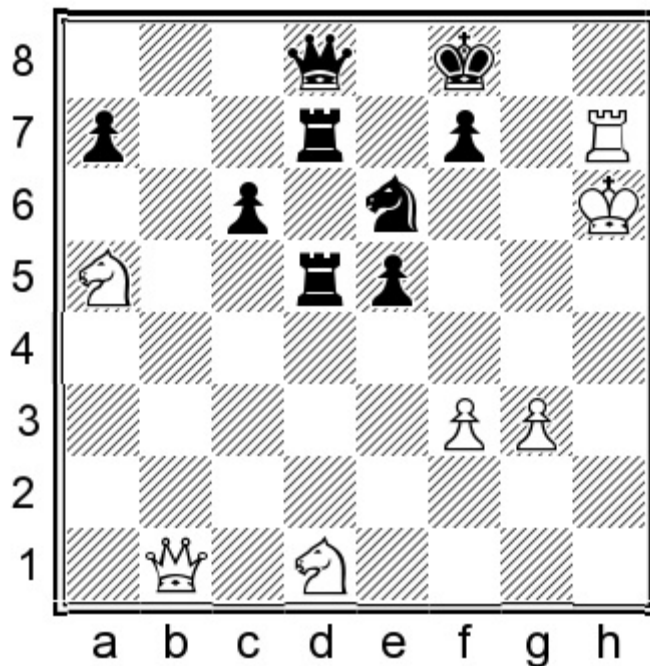
31.♙xd8 ♙f7 32.♖d6

The smoke has cleared and White remains a pawn up, which he later easily converted into victory.

1-0

Example 7

Study by A. Beliavsky, 2008

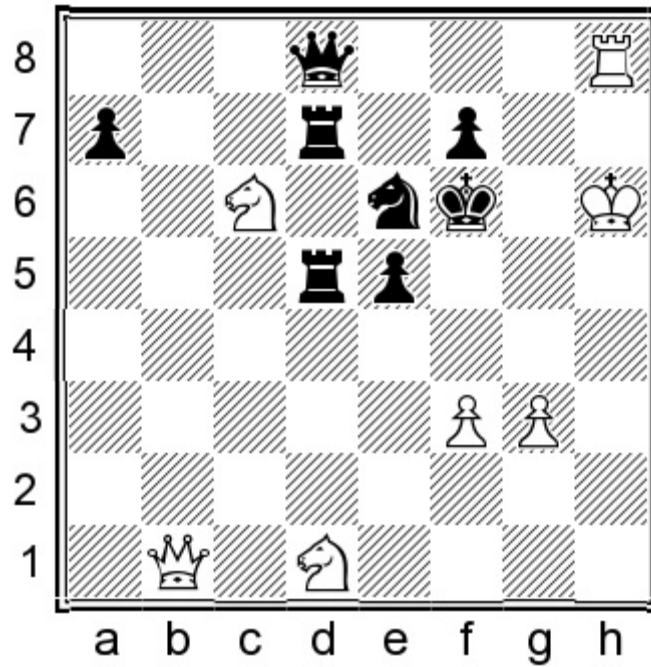


In this study you can really appreciate the power of knight geometry! White is on the move and needs to win.

1.♖h8+! ♔e7 2.♘xc6+

2.♖xd8? ♘xd8 and Black wins one of White's knights.

2...♔f6



Position after: 2...♔f6

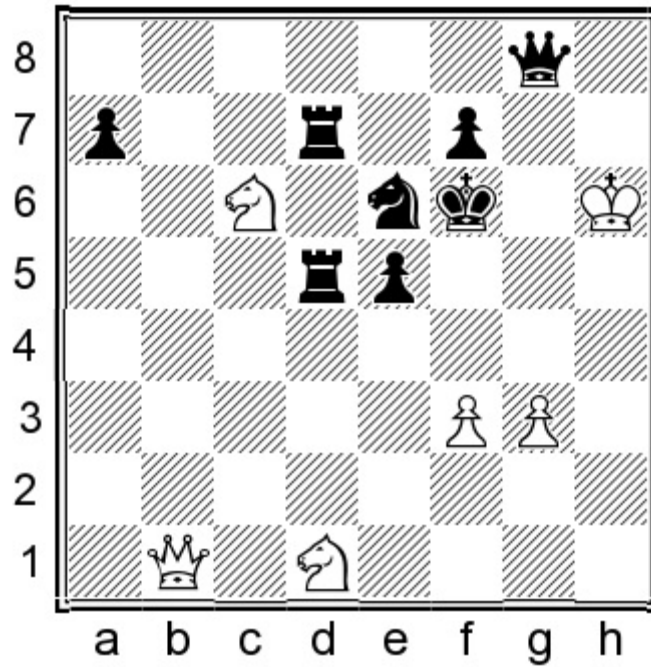
3.♜g8!!

Now this threatens to give mate after ♜g6! as the white queen joins the attack.

A) 3.♞xd8? ♜xd1! and it is Black who wins due to the poor position of the white king!

B) 3.♜xd8 ♞xd8 4.♞e3 ♞xc6 5.♝f5+ ♔e7 6.♞xd5+ ♝xd5 And White is better, though still far from winning.

3...♝xg8



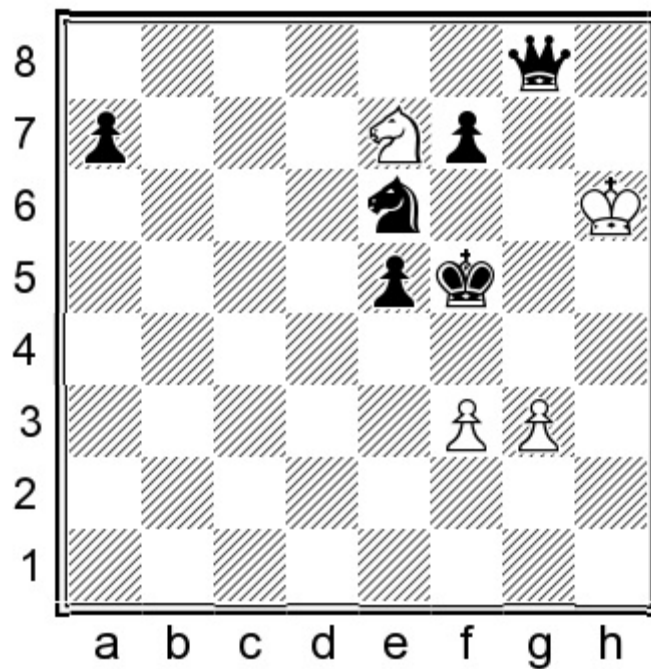
Position after: 3... ♖xg8

3... ♘g7 4. ♖xd8 ♖xd8 5. ♘xd8 ♖xd8 6. ♔h7! And White wins.

4. ♚f5+!! ♔xf5

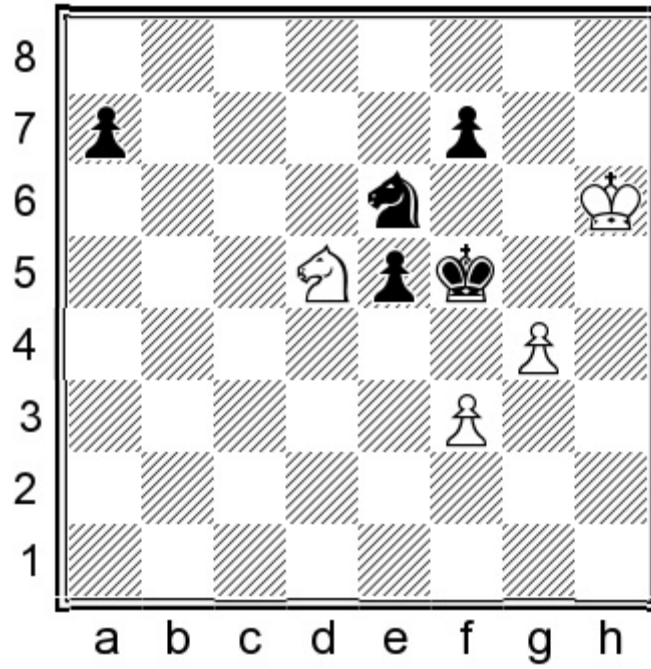
Now the knight dance begins!

5. ♘e7+! ♖xe7 6. ♘e3+ ♔f6 7. ♘d5+ ♔f5 8. ♘e7+



Position after: 8. ♖xe7+

8... ♜f6 9. ♘xg8+ ♜f5 10. ♘e7+ ♜f6 11. ♘d5+ ♜f5 12. g4#!



Position after: 12.g4#!

Mate!

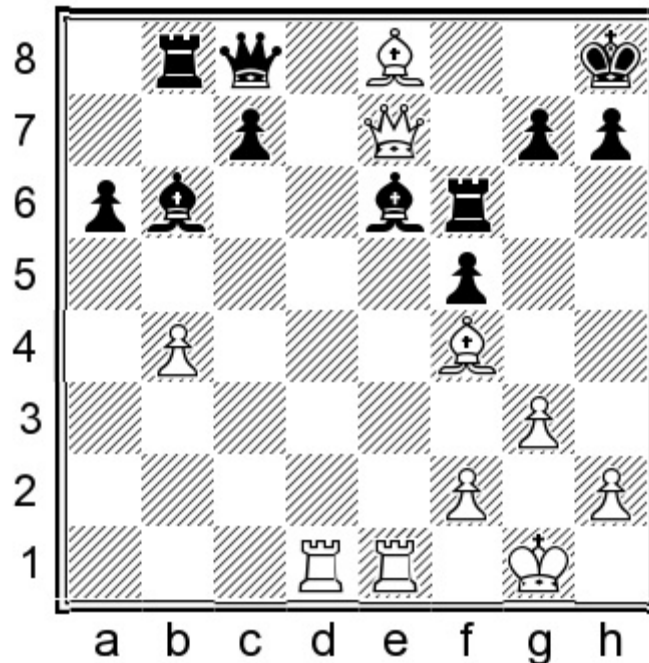
1-0

Chapter 5

Back-rank mate

Example 1

White to move wins



Back-rank weakness is an important tactical motif that is sometimes noticed only when it is too late. It is important that you develop a feeling for both your own potentially weak back rank and your opponent's.

Let's evaluate the position in the diagram.

A) Material? Black is a pawn up, but his pawns are not so safe that White would not be able to regain one if necessary. Conclusion: Black may be a little better, if better at all.

B) King safety? White's king is safer since he is only attacked by the black b6-bishop while around Black's king there are the white queen and two bishops. Conclusion: White is better.

C) Activity of the pieces? All the white pieces stand well while Black has poor coordination, unconnected rooks, and in general pieces that attack a little and defend much more. There are also potentially unprotected black pieces. Conclusion: White is better.

D) Pawn structure? The first three factors are way more important, so this factor is not so significant. However, it could be said that Black's problems are related to the f5-pawn, which makes his king weak. Also, he has three pawn islands, which reduces the importance of the pawn surplus.

The overall conclusion is that White is better in dynamic factors (king, more active pieces) and the light should already be lit that White should seek some kind of winning stroke. But how do you find it? Let's start with candidate moves.

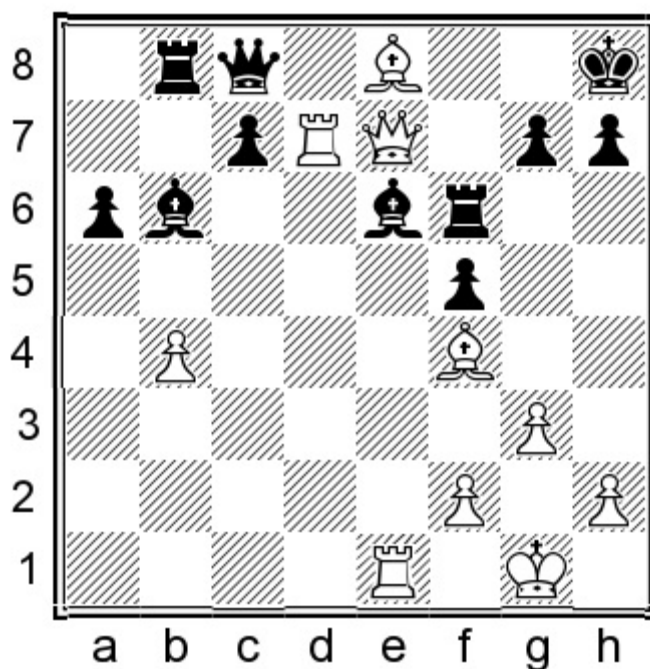
A) Every check should be considered – queen checks we can reject quickly.

B) Each capture should be looked at – $1.\text{♕xc7}$, $1.\text{♖xe6}$. while captures with the queen we quickly dismiss.

C) Now while the first two points on the list are easy to define, for the moves that pose a threat it is necessary to stop for a bit and notice some tactical features. What is most important in this position is the weakness of Black's back rank. It is defended by the black rook on f6 and the bishop on e6, since the bishop on e8 cuts the line of defense along the back rank. The e6-bishop is potentially unprotected since it is defended by the queen and a rook, and any break of that defense could have serious consequences. It is also important to notice that the white e8-bishop is under attack and White should act energetically.

Attacking Black's rook or bishop does not make much sense since Black could ignore it and take the e8-bishop. So something bigger should be attacked, but the black queen is relatively safe so we are left with a direct attack on the king. What are the moves that threaten mate and can disrupt the defensive position of black's rook and bishop? Given that a potential mate is in the air, no need to worry about material (as the mate is more valuable), so we should think about sacrifices too!

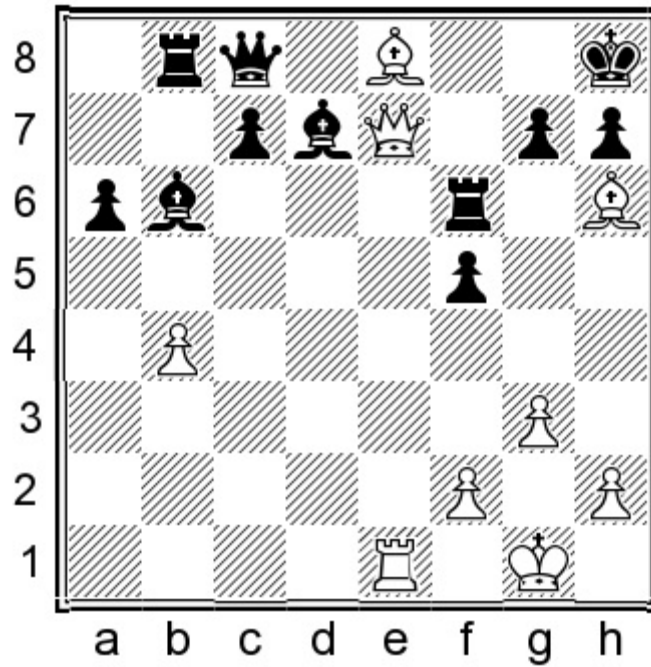
$1.\text{♖d7}!!$



Position after: $1.\text{♖d7}!!$

This stroke threatens mate on g7 and also disrupts the communication between Black's queen and bishop!

A) The capture $1.\text{♕xc7}$ needs to be examined as a candidate move, but it leads only to a draw.
 $1...\text{♕xc7}$ $2.\text{♕d7}!$



Position after: 2. ♔h6!!

Continuing to offer material just to distract the rook!

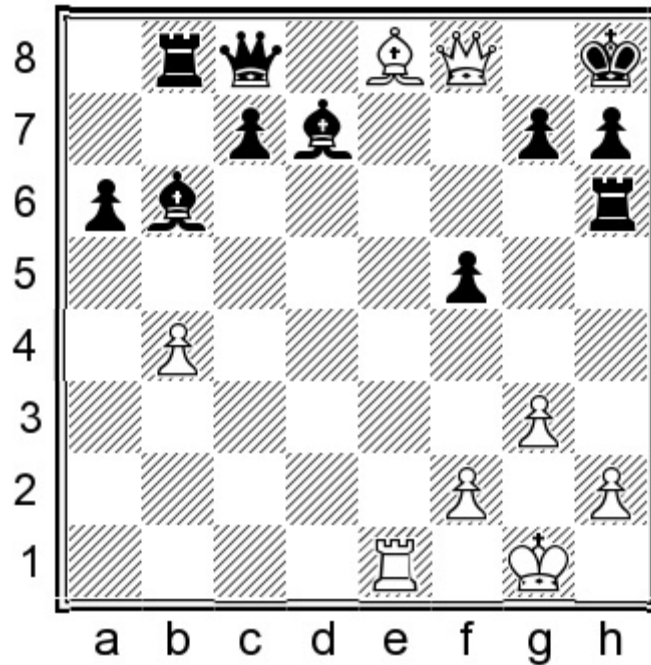
2. ♔e5? ♕xe8 As I said, something big (the mate) should be threatened.

2... ♖xh6

Mate also follows after 2... gxf6 3. ♕xf6+ ♔g8 4. ♔f7+ ♔f8 5. ♔d5#.

The goal has been achieved, mate is now inevitable.

3. ♕f8#

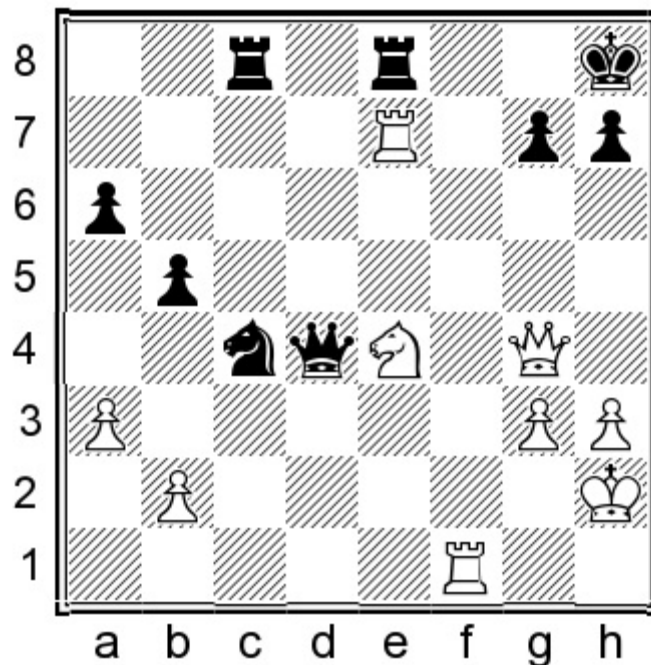


Position after: 3. ♔f8#

1-0

Example 2

White to move wins

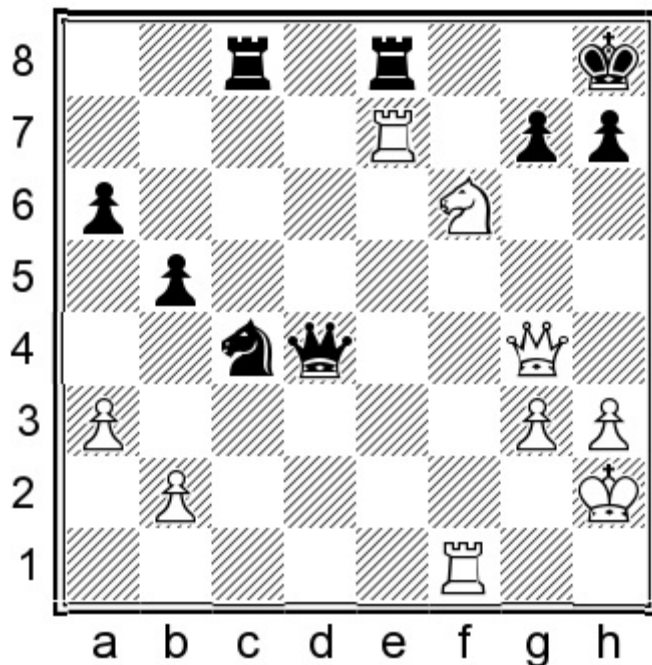


We can also see a back-rank weakness motif in this example. In general it is very important that you notice the current attacks (connections) between the pieces. Black has several potentially unprotected pieces (queen, rooks), which, combined with the weak back rank, should be a sign that it's time for a deadly blow.

Here if there were no black queen on d4 it would be mate on g7, while if there were no rook on e8 its colleague on c8 would be taken by White's queen. Checks and captures lead nowhere, so it's time for a move that poses a threat.

1. ♖f6

Interruption of communication (defense) between the black queen on d4 and the pawn on g7! And the move is also one that poses two threats – mate on g7 or taking the queen on d4.



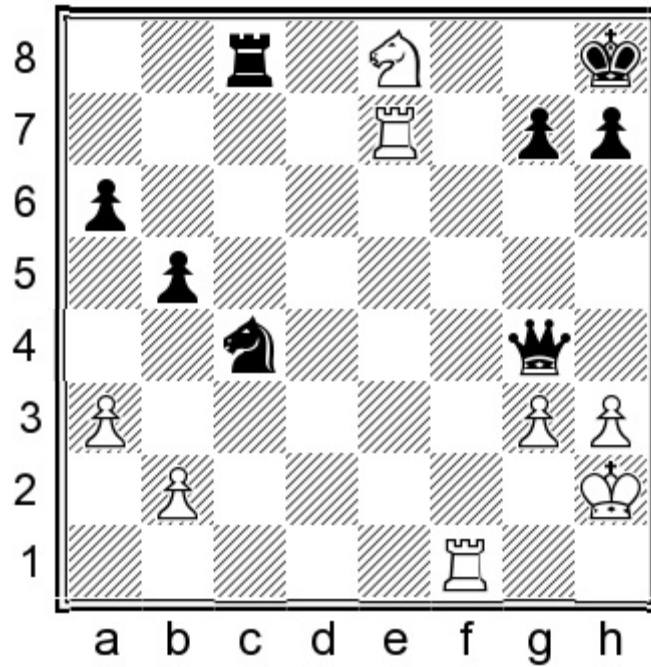
Position after: 1. ♖f6

1... ♕xg4

A) Of course after 1... ♖xe7 White can take the queen. 2. ♕xd4 [However, as I have mentioned, the rook on c8 is unprotected as well so 2. ♕xc8+.]

B) In case of 1... ♕d2+ 2. ♖h1! you can see clearly why it is important that the c8 rook is attacked by the queen and that the e8 rook is obliged to defend it! 2... ♖xe7 3. ♕xc8+ Mate follows.

2. ♖xe8!+-



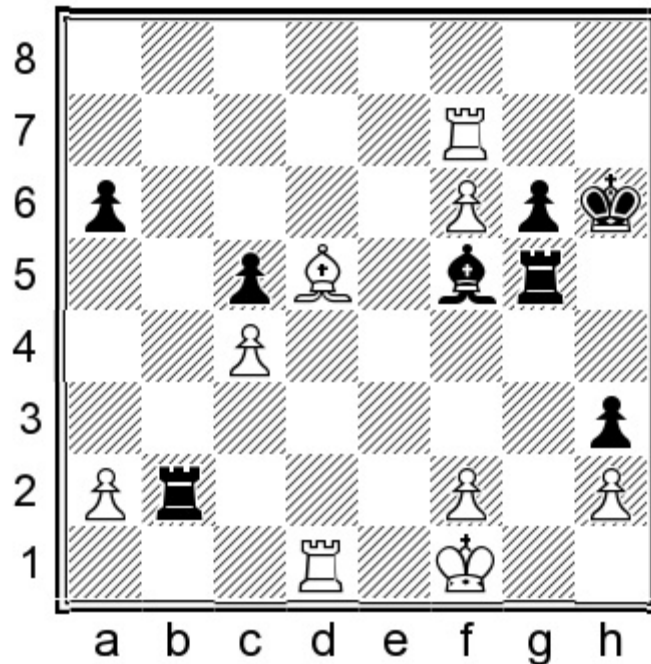
Position after: 2. ♖xe8!+-

This intermezzo move is the point of the combination. Mate on f8 is threatened and at the same time the black queen is under attack. Black's rook cannot parry both threats.

1-0

Example 3

From Safarli – Rasulov
Nakhchivan 2012



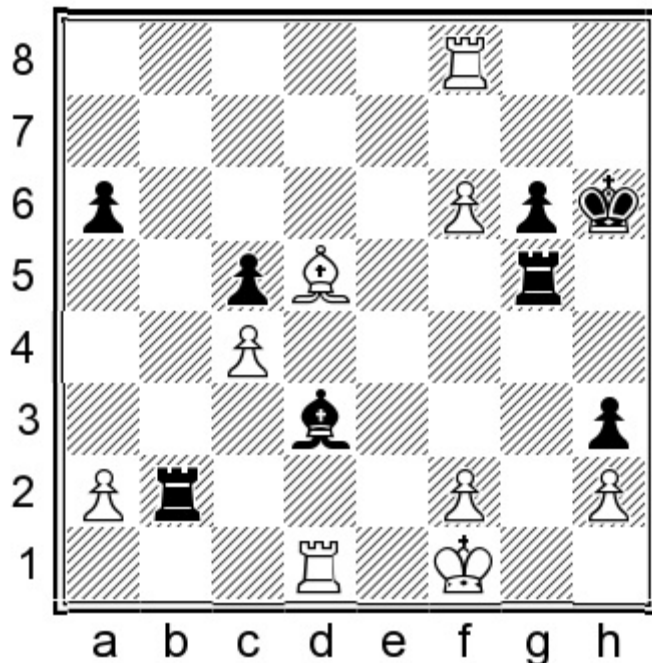
White, although a top grandmaster, did not sense the danger associated with the weakness of his back rank, and moved carelessly.

36. ♖f8??

If White had been aware of Black's threat, he would have played 36. ♖b7! and kept a pull.

Now comes the wonderful punishment.

36... ♕d3+!



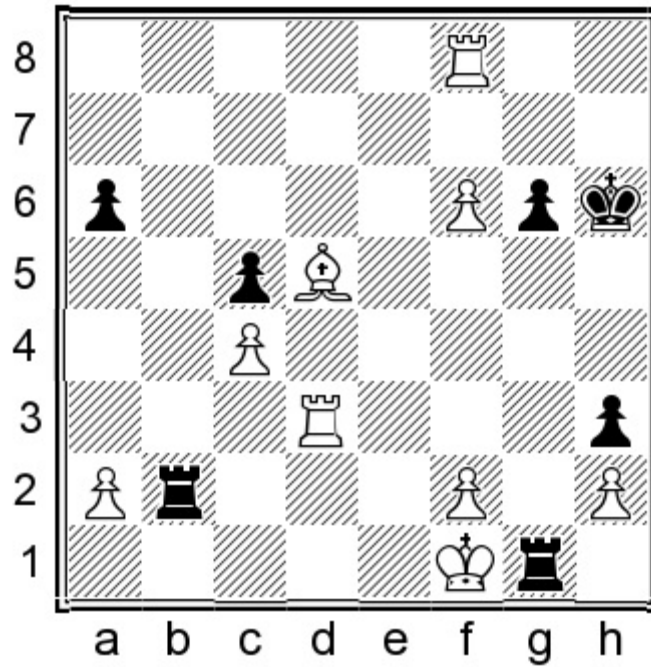
Position after: 36... ♕d3+!

37. ♖xd3

37. ♔e1 ♖g1#

And now comes the point – dragging the king onto the square where White will not be able to defend the back-rank mate!

37... ♖g1+!!



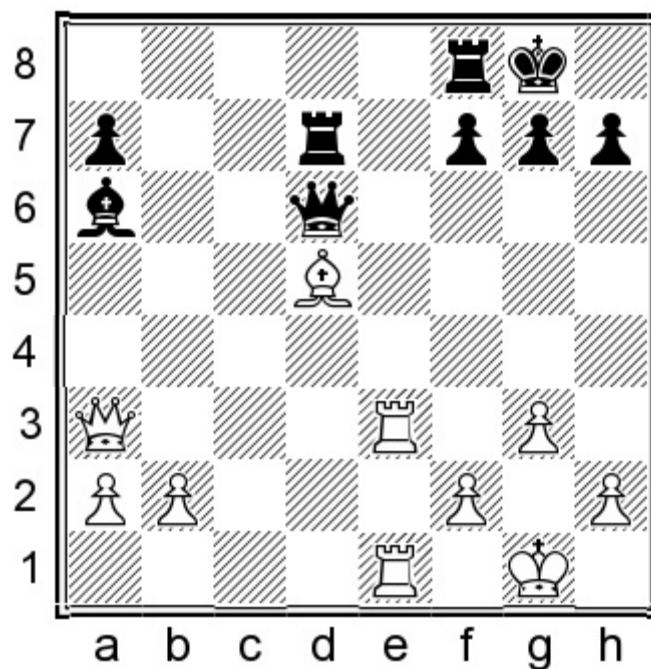
Position after: 37...Rg1+!!

38.♔xg1 ♖b1+ 39.♞d1 ♜xd1#

0-1

Example 4

From Lombardy – Kramer
New York 1957

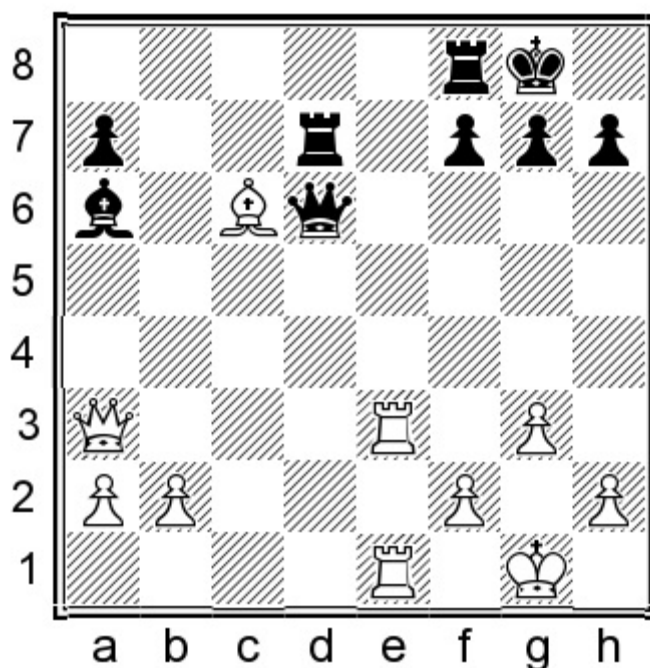


The weakness of the back rank can be very hidden, as in this example. It's hard to believe that Black

will face problems caused by a weak back rank, but that's exactly what happens! White is a pawn up, but given that there are few potentially unprotected pieces in Black's camp, he is looking for a killing blow. Let's try to ask ourselves a question, what would happen if we remove some pieces from the board?

If there were no rook on d7, White could take the black queen on d6. If there were no rook on f8, it would be mate on the back rank. If there were no queen on d6, the bishop on a6 would be lost. But what else would happen if there were no queen on d6? The queen sacrifice on f8 would lead to mate when the rook comes to e8! So Black's communication is on very shaky ground – what move can disrupt it? The answer lies in the move

21. ♖c6!!



Position after: 21. ♖c6!!

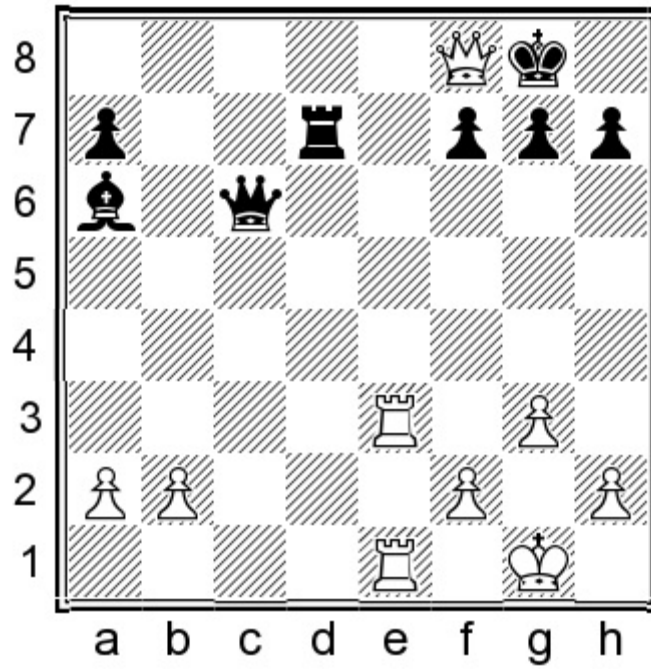
21... ♙xc6

A) Moving the d7-rook loses material. 21... ♖c7 22. ♙xd6

B) Or 21... ♖dd8 22. ♙xa6.

C) No better is 21... ♙xa3 22. ♖xa3 when White attacks two pieces and must win one of them.

22. ♙xf8+!!



Position after: 22. ♔xf8+!!

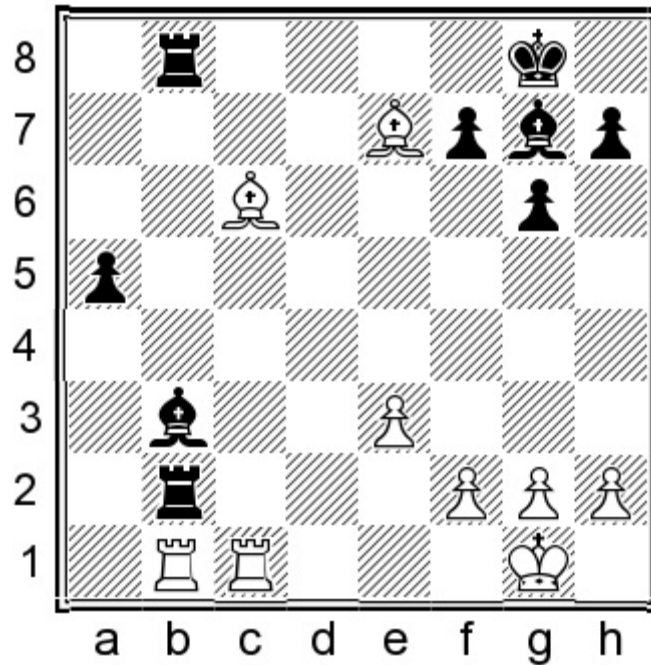
This is the combination I mentioned.

22... ♔xf8 23. ♖e8#

1-0

Example 5

From Vasquez – Van Riemsdijk
Sao Paulo 1972



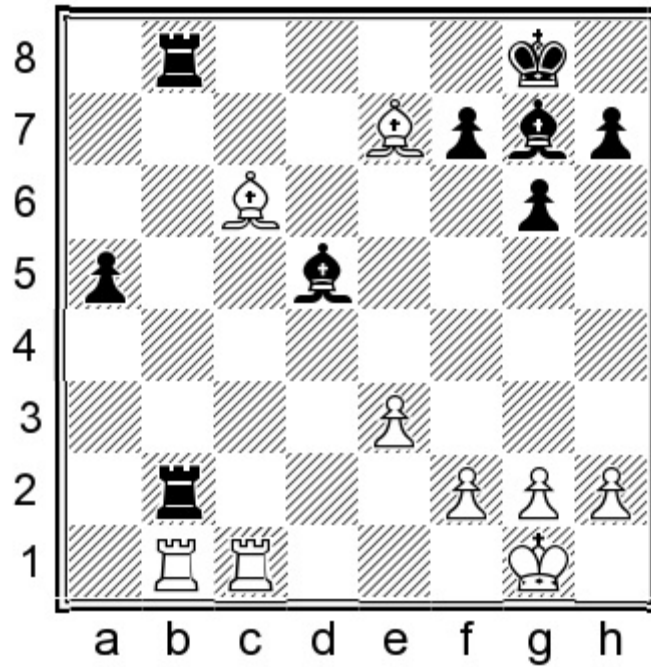
Black to move

Tactical combinations associated with the back-rank motif can also be found in endgames. Often one detail, that neither White nor Black have a “luft” (escape route) for their king, can drastically change the assessment of a position from safe to lost! Sometimes, on account of a complex fight earlier in the game, one side could not create a luft with a move like h2-h3 because that would have been a waste of time in the opening or middlegame.

Sometimes this problem with the back rank is related to a lack of the sense of danger that would prevent later unpleasant surprises! However, a basic motif can rarely be individually crucial to a tactical combination so at least one more element is needed, and most often it is an unprotected piece. Considering that captures do not favor Black in this example, you have to think of a move that poses a threat. But to be able to do so, you still need to recognize the function of the pieces! Here, virtually all the white pieces are potentially unprotected because they are not defended by pawns.

Your focus should be on one black piece, namely the b3-bishop. If we removed it from the board Black would take the rook on b1. This means that all of that bishop’s moves should be considered as candidate moves. When you see everything, you will come to the winning move.

25...♗d5!



Position after: 25...♔d5!

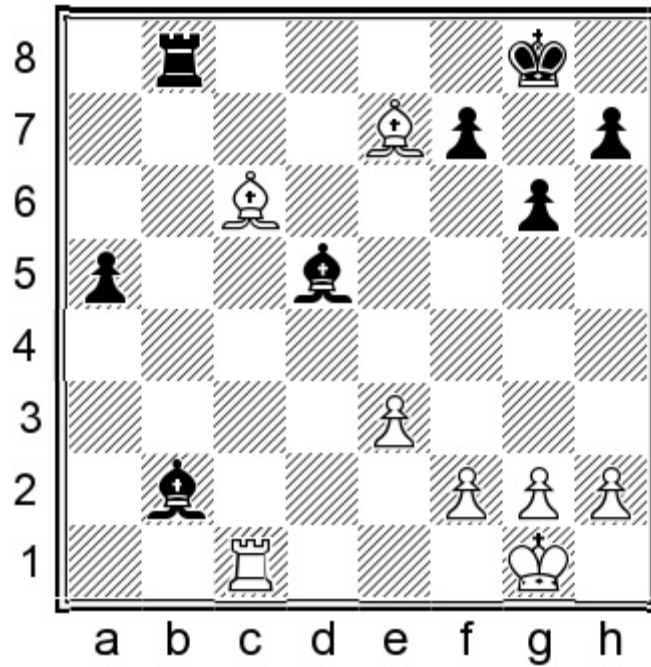
White now has virtually no choice, he has to exchange the rook, which means that one piece defending the back rank is gone.

26.♖xb2

A) Black wins easily after 26.♖a1 ♔xc6 27.♖xc6 ♖b1+ 28.♖c1 ♔xa1.

B) Or 26.♔xd5 ♖xb1.

26...♔xb2!



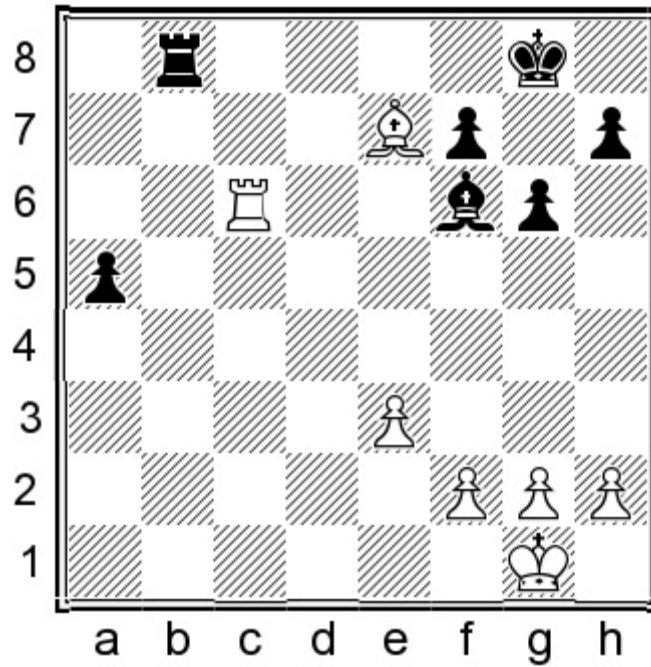
Position after: 26...♙xb2!

The essential move! The white rook is overloaded. It must support its bishop, so with a heavy heart it will leave the back rank.

27.♖c2 ♗xc6 28.♖xc6

Again, if there were no black bishop on b2 it would be mate, which means that all the bishop's moves should be considered!

28...♗f6!



Position after: 28...♔f6!

The most concrete move since besides the threat of the mate, Black also attacks the bishop.

29.♔a3

The only move that does not lose immediately, but now further distraction will follow.

29...♔e7!

But not the immediate 29...♜b1+ because of 30.♞c1.

30.♔c1

30.♔xe7 ♜b1+

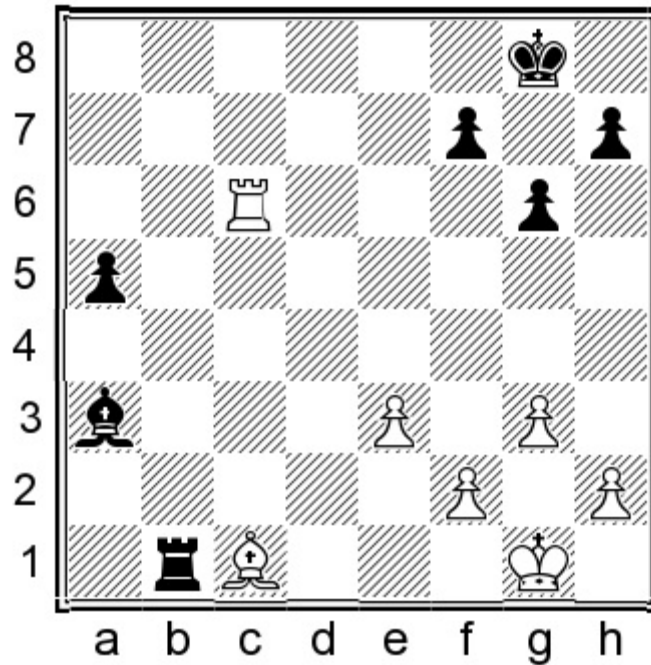
30...♜b1

Now a second tactical element emerges – the pin, which will win White’s bishop.

31.g3

Neither does 31.♞c3 help, because of 31...♔a3!.

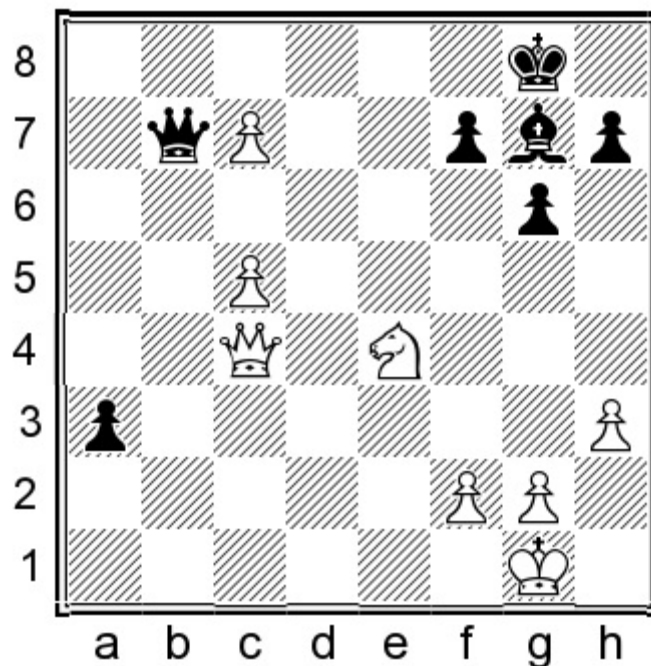
31...♔a3 0-1



Position after: 31...♔a3

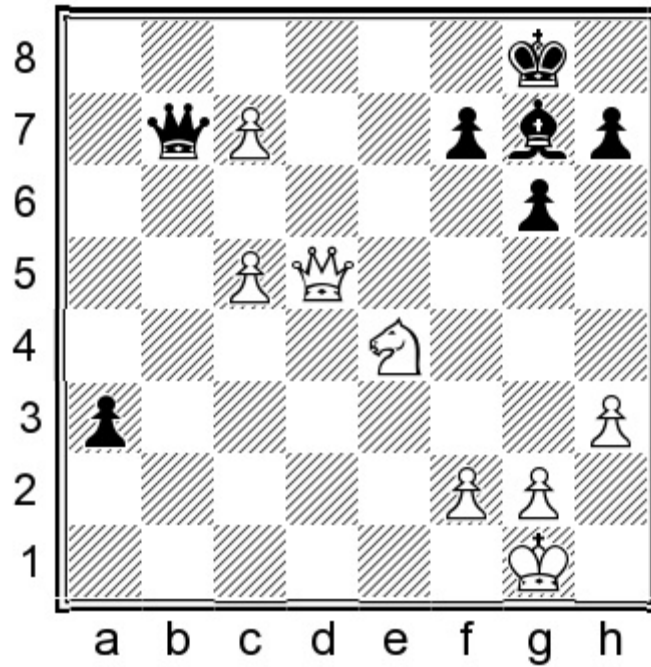
Example 6

From Ni Hua – Vidit
Qatar 2015



Back-rank weaknesses can be related to other tactical factors, such as the knight geometry that you can find in this example. It is the black queen that holds Black's position together, since it stops the white pawn from queening. The move that unlocks the black position is

1.♔d5!



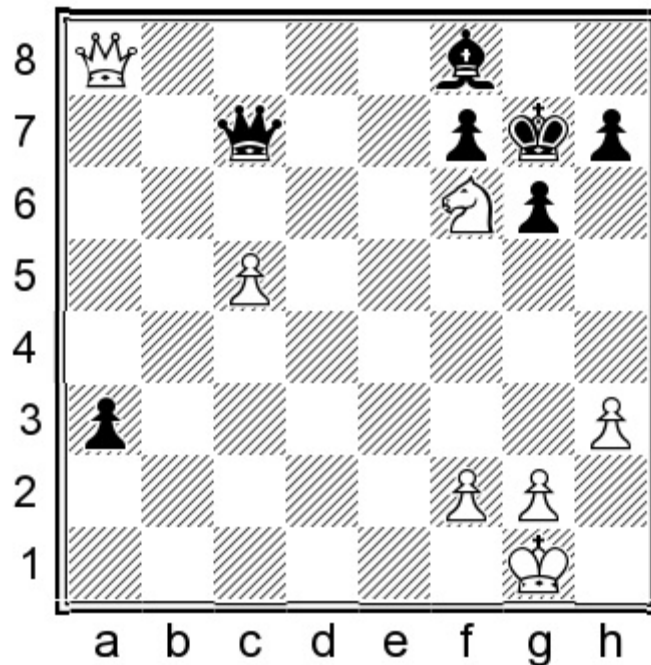
Position after: 1. ♔d5!

1...a2

An attempt to avoid losing the queen.

A) Of course 1... ♔b1+ leads nowhere for Black because of 2. ♕h2.

B) The knight geometry combined with the back-rank motif is best seen in case of 1... ♔xc7 2. ♔a8+! ♕f8 3. ♖f6+! ♔g7



Position after: 3... ♔g7

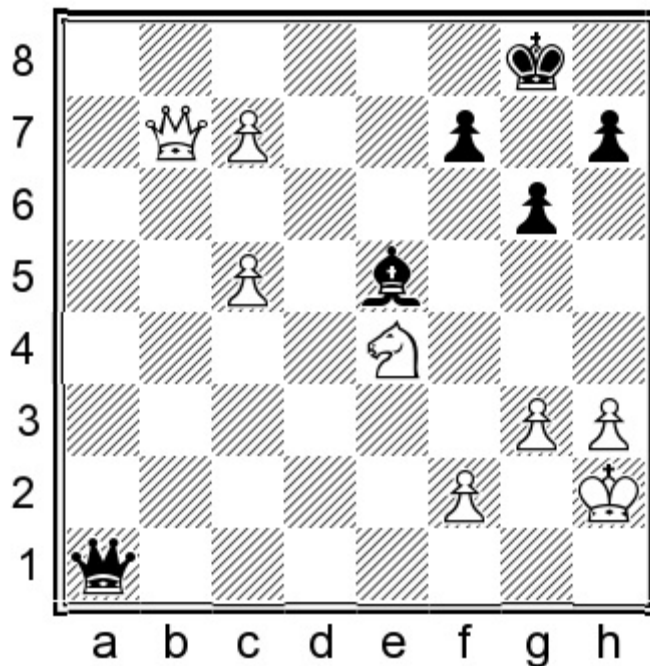
And since the black king had to defend its bishop, the geometry is set up: 4. ♖e8+! wins the queen.

C) Similar is after 1... ♙xd5 2. c8=♙+ ♕f8 3. ♗f6+!

Again the black queen falls.

However, White wins easily after

2. ♙xb7 a1=♙+ 3. ♖h2 ♕e5+ 4. g3



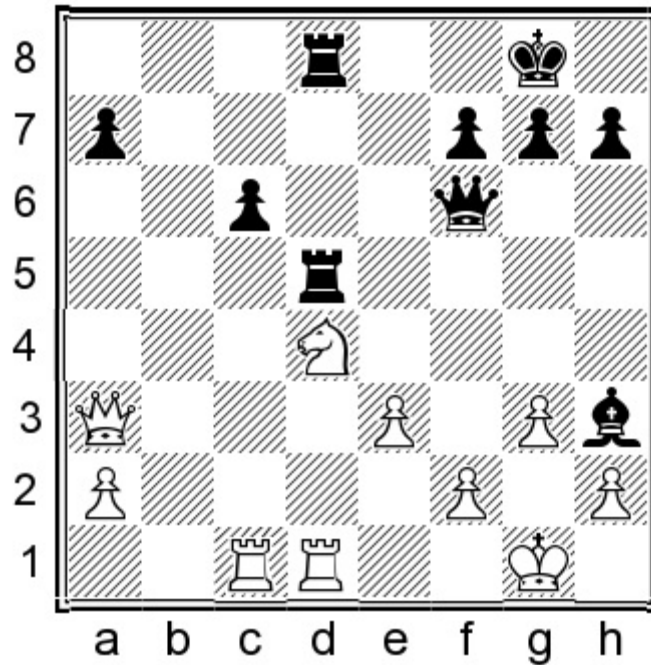
Position after: 4.g3

1-0

Example 7

From Garcia Palermo – Todorovic

Novi Sad 2017



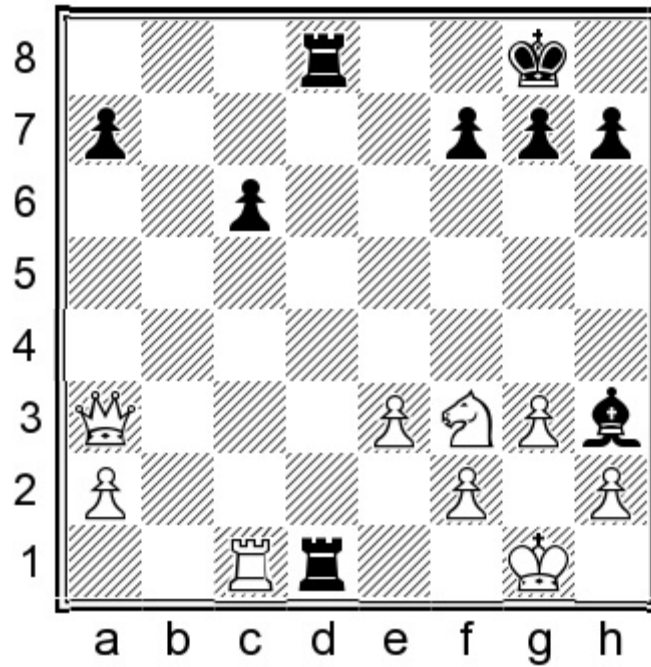
The weakness of the back rank can exist even if the king has an open square in front of its castled position, which is the

case in this example. White seems to have achieved some sort of good defensive setup of his pieces, though it is clear that it is Black who is attacking. The knight on d4 holds the position together, but removing it directly with ...♖xd4 does not lead to a win.

Then you probably think of a move that poses a threat, in the form of the queen sacrifice ...♔f3 threatening mate, but alas that doesn't work for Black either. Now you are ready to find the solution, which is first to distract the rook from c1 and then to sacrifice the queen!

22...c5!

A) The immediate 22...♔f3? doesn't work because of 23.♘xf3 ♖xd1+



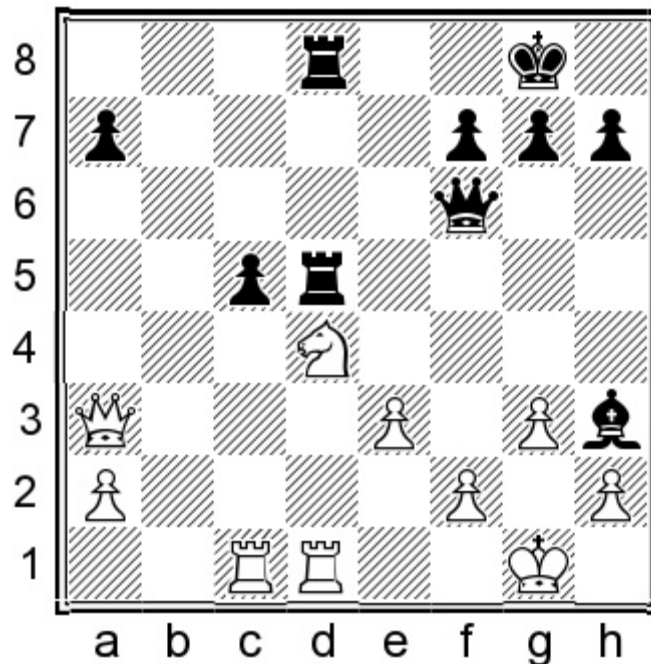
Position after: 23...♖xd1+

24.♘e1!

B) Neither does 22...♖xd4 23.exd4, and the white queen has gained control of the f3-square.

22...c5!

White has no choice but to take on c5.

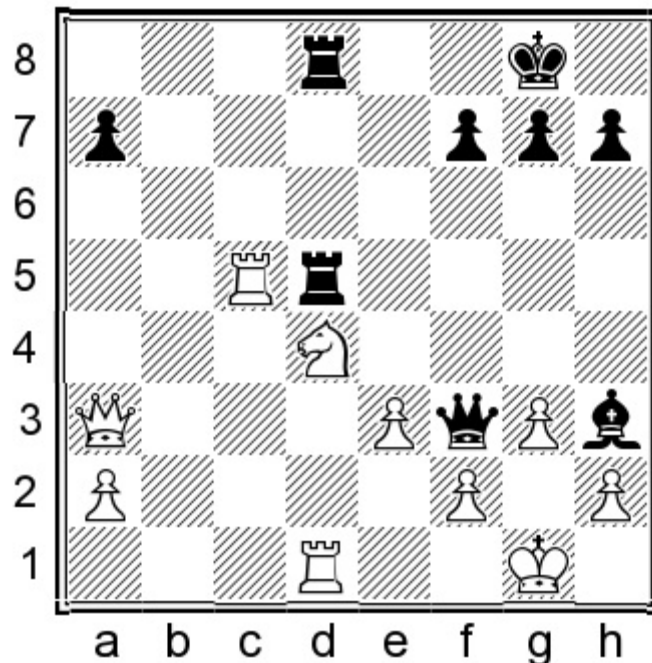


Position after: 22...c5!

23. ♖xc5

And only now does Black play

23... ♕f3!



Position after: 23... ♕f3!

24. ♘xf3 ♖xd1+

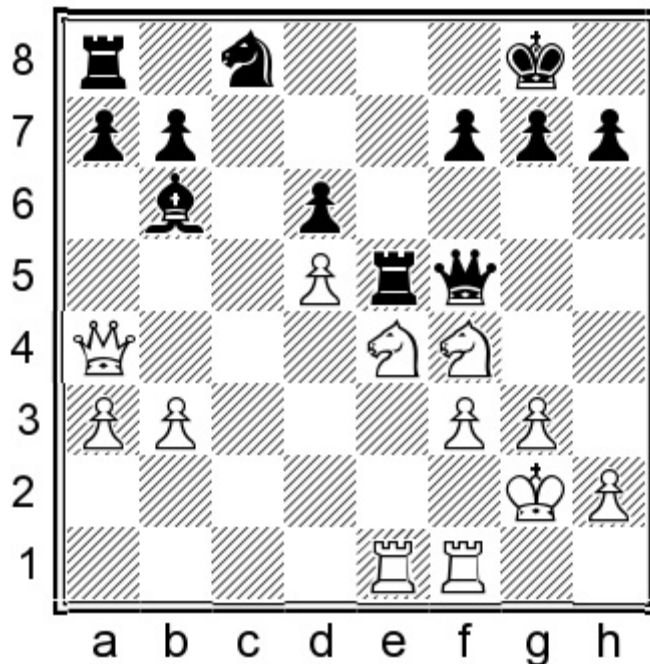
White is defenseless.

25. ♘e1 ♖xe1#

Mate. It is important to spot that Black does not have a luft for his king, which means that he had a good feeling for the back-rank weakness since he wasted no time creating a luft for himself. **0-1**

Example 8

From Plat – Szadkowski
Katowice 2017



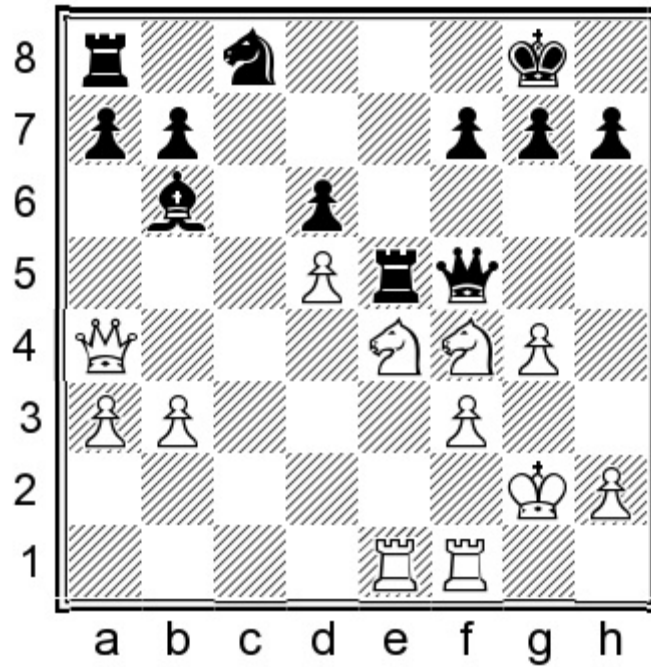
An experienced grandmaster's eye will spot a weakness of the back rank even in a game with a fast time control, as is the case here. How do you come up with an idea for White in this position? Again, something smells of a weak back rank. If there were no knight on e4 White would with ♔e8+ force a quick mate. Therefore, any knight jump from e4 is a candidate move. Then you notice the move ♘f6+, but it's not good because of the capture ...gxf6 (but not ...♔xf6). How to force Black to take with the queen after ♘f6+? Given that checkmate is in the air, it may be possible to "jettison" some material, like on a ship that is too heavy.

25.g4!!

A) 25. ♔e8+?? ♖xe8

B) 25. ♘f6+? gxf6!

25.g4!!



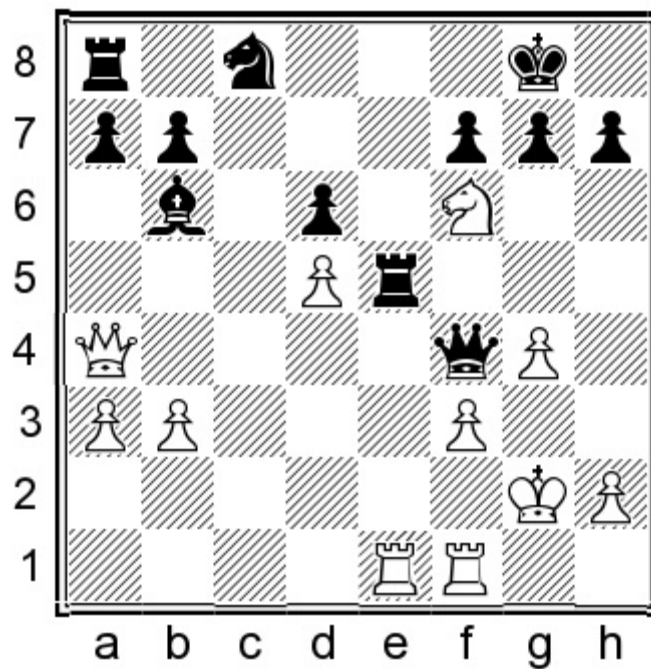
Position after: 25.g4!!

The black queen has no other squares, it must take the knight.

25...♙xf4

And only now, after forcing the queen to f4, there follows

26.♘f6+!



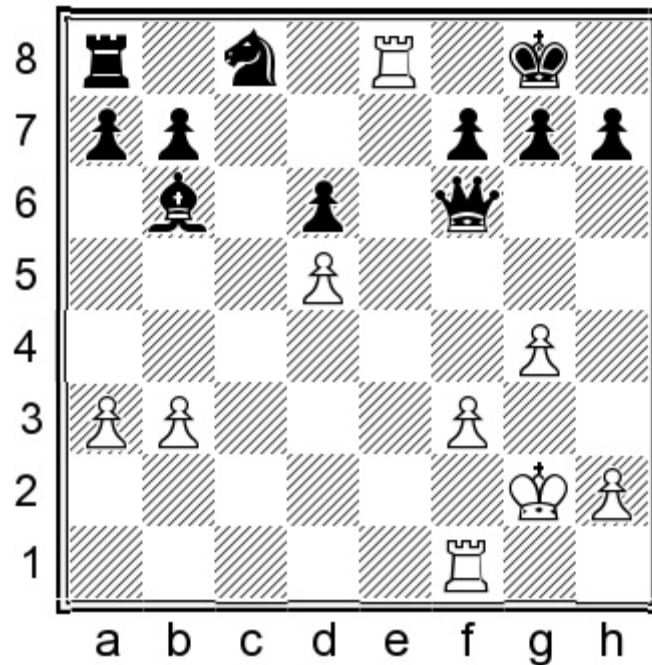
Position after: 26.♘f6+!

Now Black must take with the queen on f6 or lose his unprotected queen, which is according to our plan. Then follows

26...♙xf6

26...gxf6 27.♙xf4

27.♙e8+ ♖xe8 28.♖xe8#

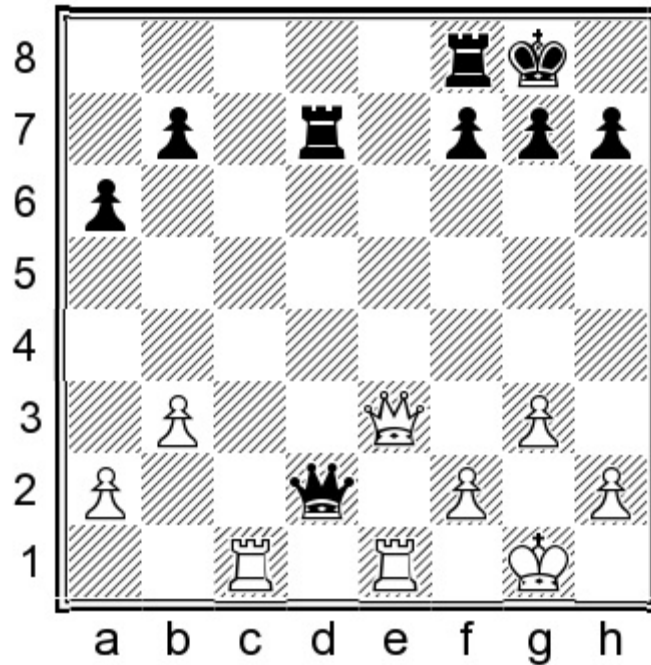


Position after: 28.♖xe8#

Mate! 1-0

Example 9

From Lie – Gausel
Oslo 2017



Greed in chess is sometimes so great that one forgets about the opponent's possibilities. If Black had developed a sense for weakness in his back rank, he would have taken care to open a space for the king, as White had.

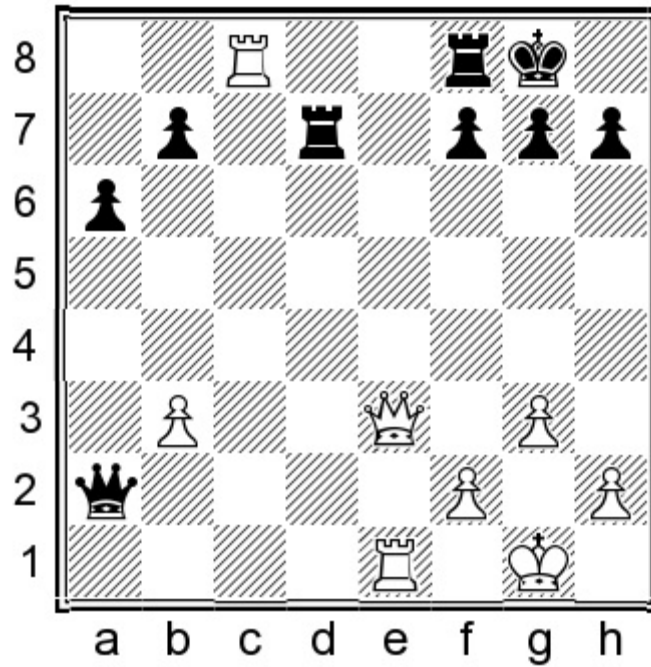
24...♔xa2

A) Better was 24...g6!.

B) Or 24...h6!.

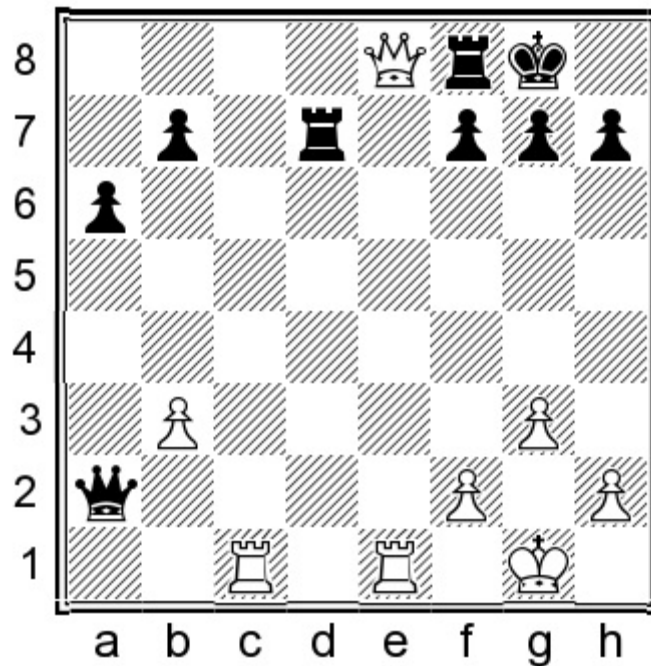
But Black was overcome by greed. Now White can take advantage of the back-rank weakness with the winning move. How did he find it? Tempting is ♕e8 when Black gets mated if he takes the queen, but Black is not forced to capture the white queen. It is true that White threatens to sacrifice his queen by taking the f8-rook, after which the c1-rook comes to the eighth rank to deliver the mate, but Black can easily parry this threat. How to threaten something more powerful? It is important to notice that the black rook on f8 can't move, because then the ♕e8+ sacrifice would win on the spot. Also, the other black rook on d7 is unprotected, a factor which could be used somehow. We need a move that poses a threat, and since in our mind every move that does that is a candidate move, then you can find

25.♖c8!!



Position after: 25. Rxc8!!

Now exchanging rooks is the mate threat! Tempting, but not good enough is 25. Qe8



Position after: 25. Qe8

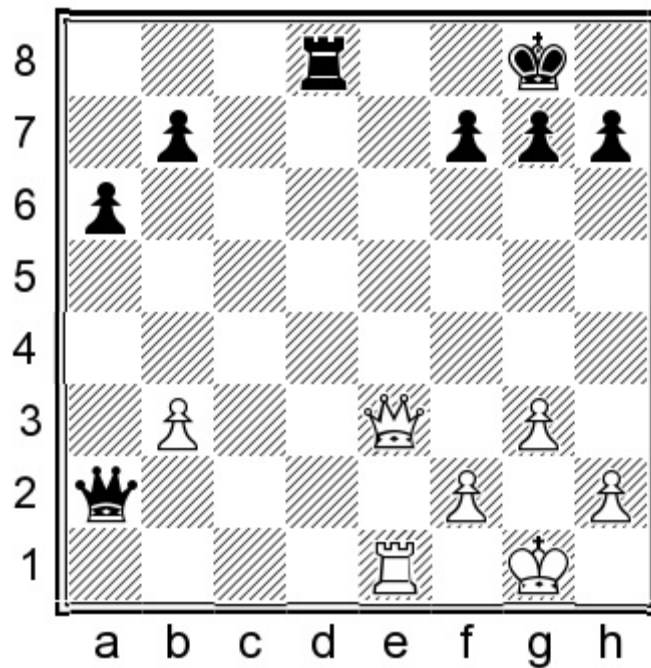
A) 25... Rd8 26. Rxc8 Rxc8!

B) Or 25... Qd2 26. Rxc8 [26. Qxf8+ Qxf8 27. Rxc8+ Rd8!] 26... Qxe1+! 27. Qxe1 Rxc8.

25... Qa3!

The only defense, but White has a plan for that as well.

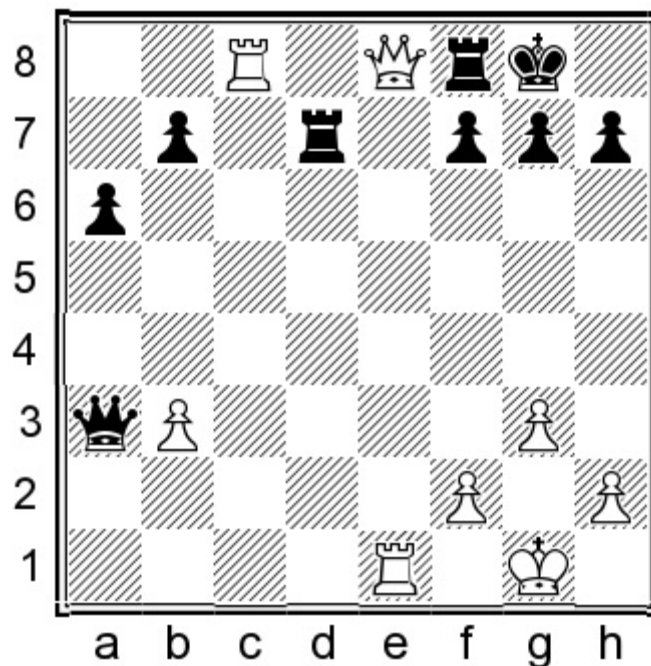
Black does not save himself after 25...♖dd8 26.♖xd8 ♖xd8



Position after: 26...♖xd8

because the f8-rook has left its position, which as we know allows mate after 27.♙e8+!

26.♙e8!



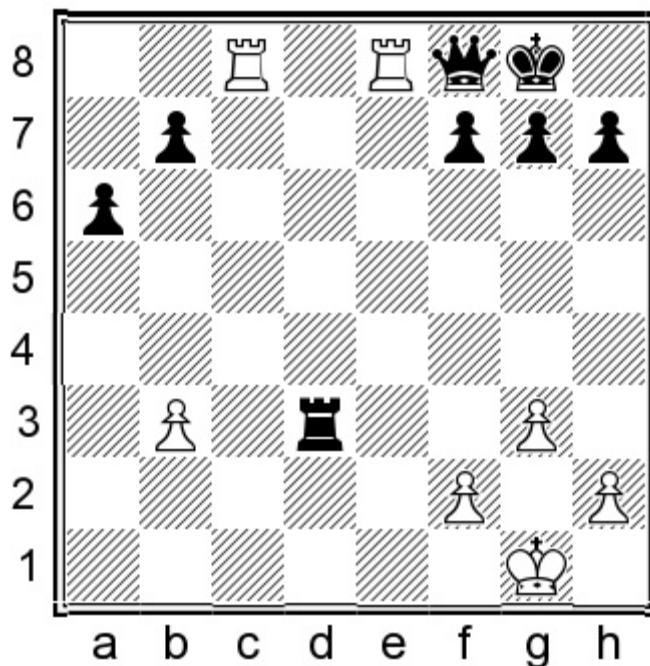
Position after: 26.♙e8!

The d7-rook is attacked and must run away.

26...♖d3

But now comes the decisive blow.

27.♔xf8+! ♔xf8 28.♖ee8



Position after: 28.♖ee8

White has succeeded in creating unbearable pressure along Black's back rank and the game ends with mate after

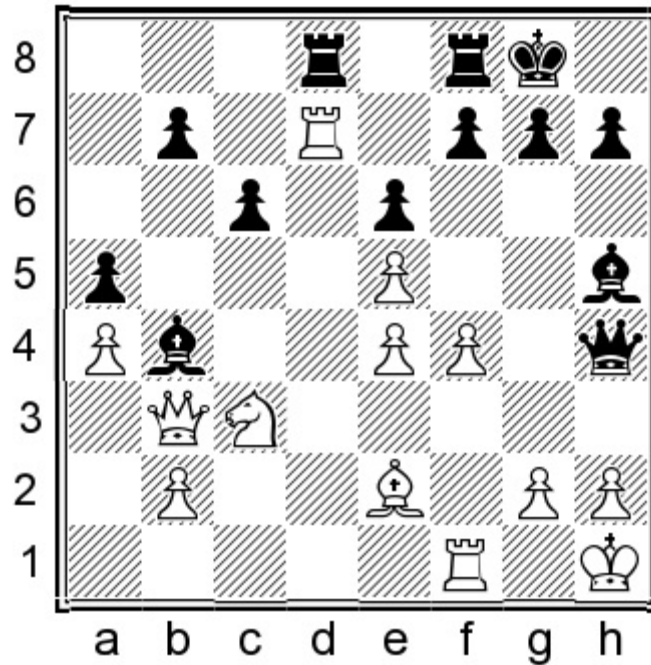
28...♔xe8 29.♖xe8#

1-0

Example 10

From Janssen – I. Sokolov

Leeuwarden 2002

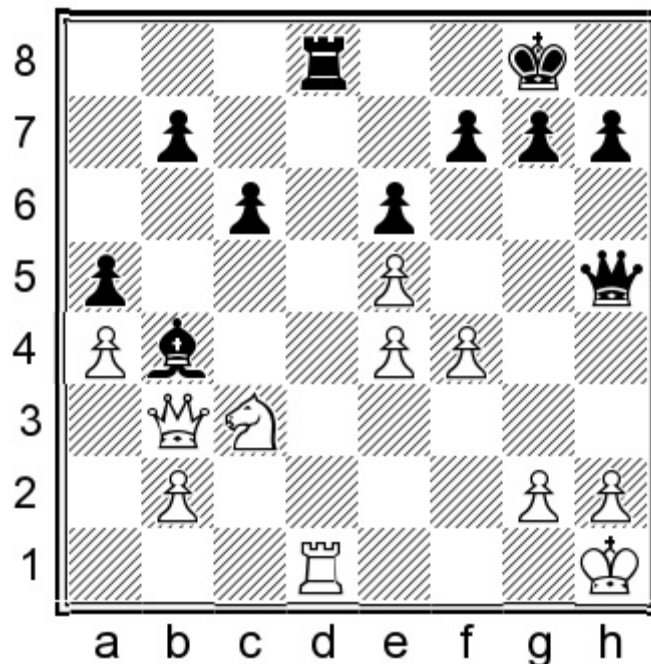


As I've said, there are cases when the weakness of the back rank can be seen in outline even though the king is not hemmed in, but due to other tactical factors the king in the end suffers back-rank mate. That's the case in following example. White decided to attack the queen and create luft for his king, but in this way he weakened his back rank.

21.g3?

White drives away the queen, so d8 is no longer defended twice. Also his king gets some air.

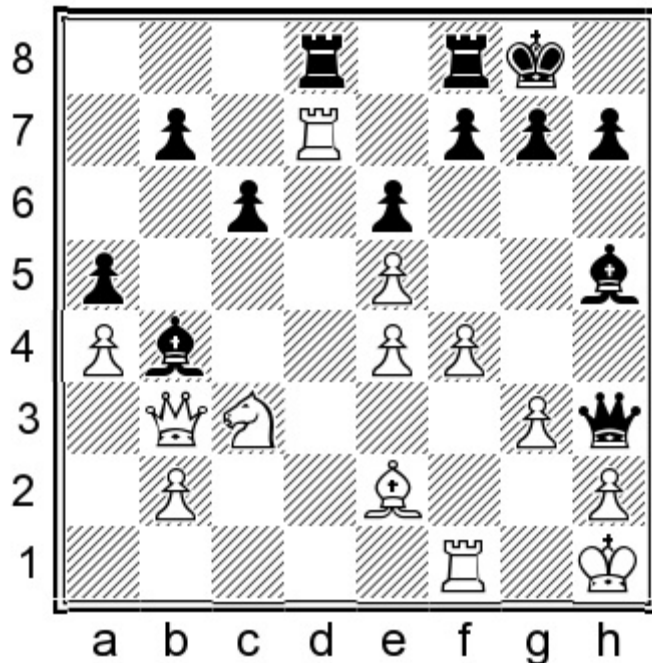
Best was to exchange pieces with 21.♖xd8 ♜xd8 22.♙xh5 ♚xh5 23.♞d1



Position after: 23.♞d1

though even then Black keeps the pull after 23...♖xd1+ [Or even 23...♖e8 with the same ideas, but to leave as many pieces on the board as possible to make things harder to White.] 24.♙xd1 ♚xd1+ 25.♘xd1 g5 26.fxg5 ♕d2 27.h4 ♕f4

21.g3? ♔h3

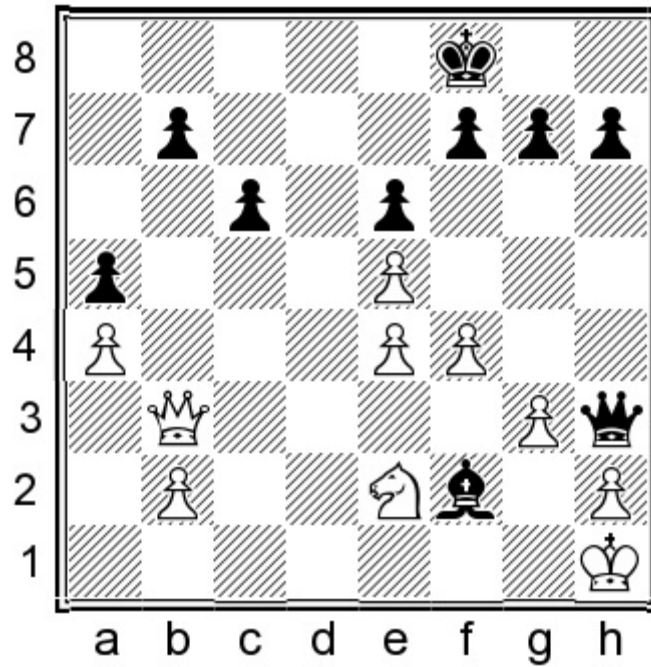


Position after: 21...♔h3

Suddenly White is in big trouble. The rook on f1 is under attack since Black is about to exchange the light-squared bishop that is defending it. And the king can't help because then it would come under attack from Black's dark-squared bishop.

22.♖xd8 ♖xd8

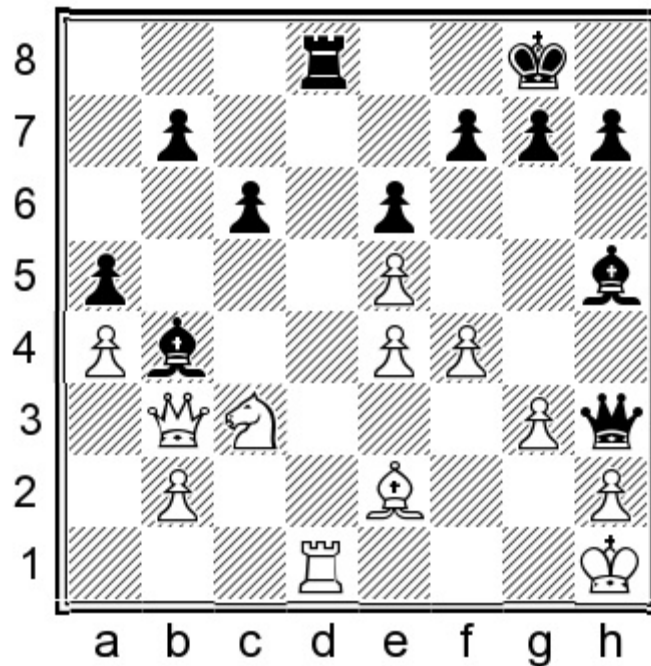
White saves himself in case of 22...♕xe2 23.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 24.♖f2 ♕c5 25.♘xe2 ♕xf2



Position after: 25... ♔xf2

26. ♔d1! and there is no mate.

23. ♖d1



Position after: 23. ♖d1

White was counting on this position when playing the g3 move and it seems that everything is fine for him as he is threatening to exchange the rooks on d8 with check.

However, Sokolov in his calculation saw a move further and now plays a strike highlighting the weakness of the back rank!

23...♖d2!!

Suddenly White is completely lost!

24.♖xd2

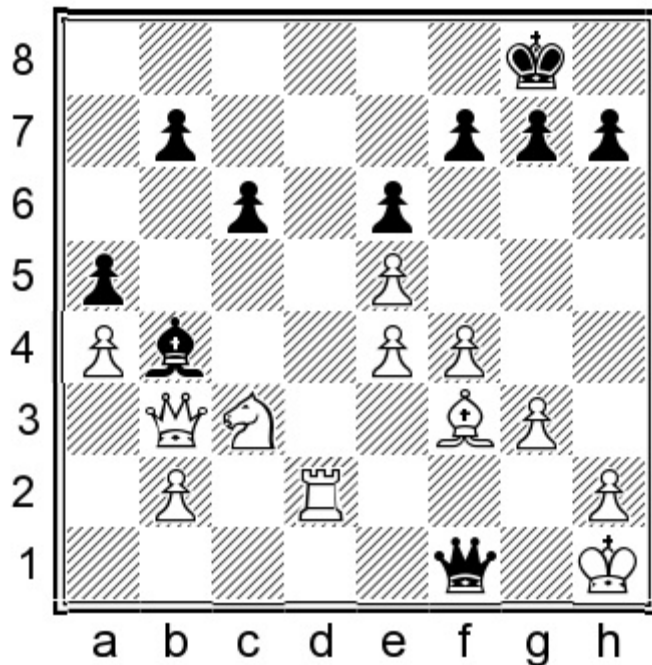
First, one piece that is defending the back rank is drawn away.

24...♙f3+!! 25.♙xf3

Then the second one.

Mate comes also in case of 25.♔g1 ♚g2#

25...♚f1#



Position after: 25...♚f1#

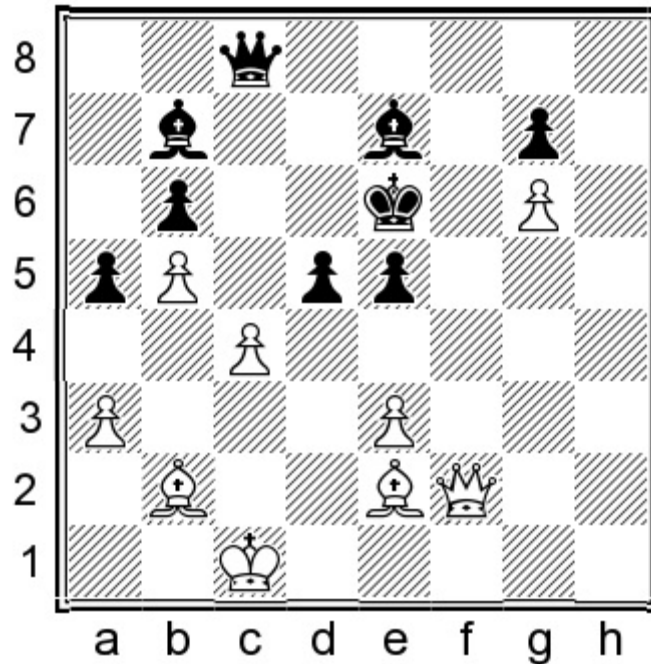
0-1

Chapter 6

Lure the king

Example 1

From Indjic – Cruz
Baku 2016



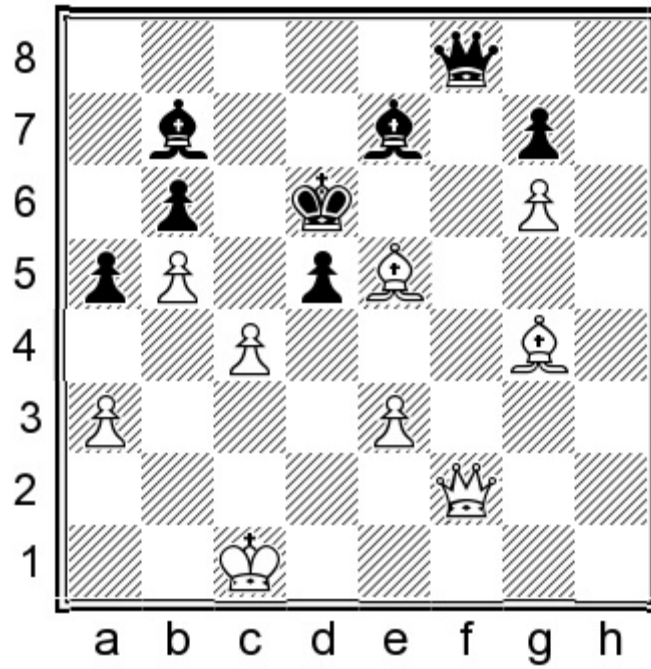
Checkmate is the goal of the chess fight, with gaining material a secondary objective. Therefore one has to be very skilled in attacking the king, which usually hides behind its pawns while the queens are on the board. Finding cunning ways to lure the opponent's king into danger is an important skill to acquire. Usually, this involves sacrificing a piece for one of the pawns that protect the king, as is the case in this example. White is threatening 1. ♔f7+ so Black is trying to prevent that and plays

30... ♔f8

But now follows a “petite combinaison”, to borrow Capablanca's term.

31. ♘g4+! ♔d6 32. ♘xe5+!!

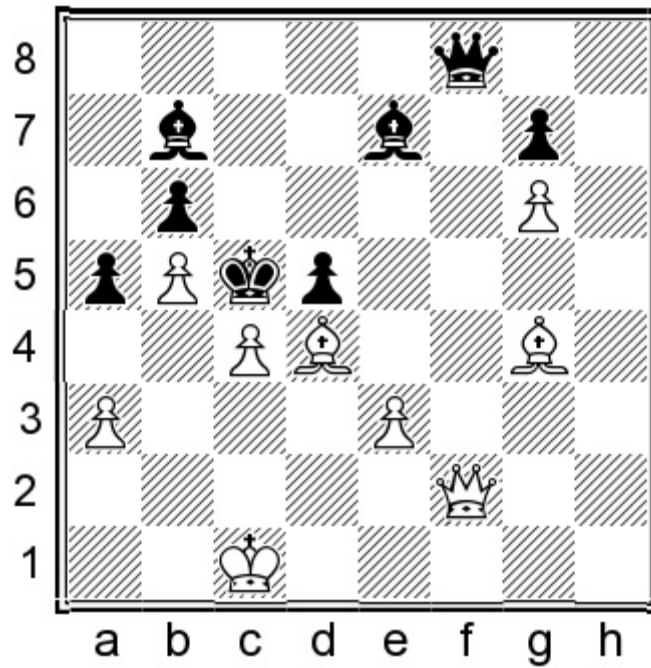
Forcing the king into the open!



Position after: 32. ♔xe5+!!

32... ♔xe5

Mate comes also after 32... ♔c5 33. ♕d4+



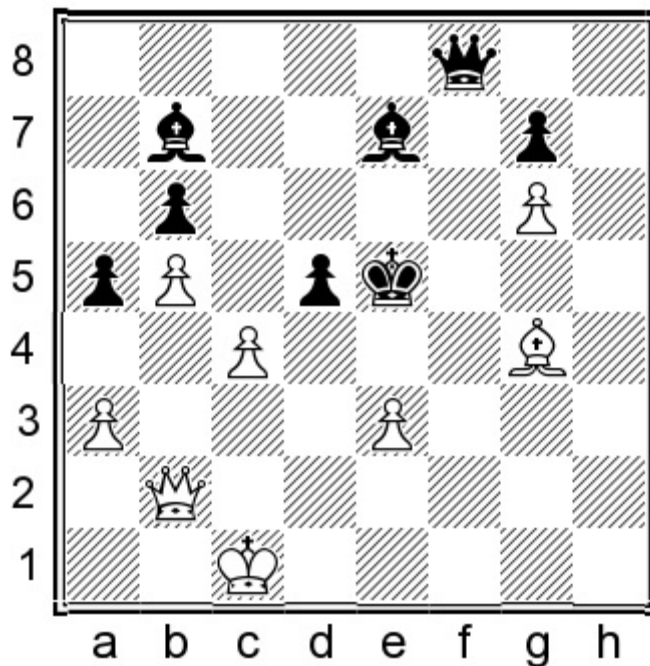
Position after: 33. ♕d4+

33... ♔xc4 [33... ♔d6 34. ♖g3+] 34. ♖c2+ ♔xb5 35. ♕e2#.

33. ♖b2+!

It is easy to overlook such long moves with the queen.

One book about Bobby Fischer says in analysis of his playing style “He tends to overlook long moves with the queen”, which shows that even World Champions can suffer from this drawback!



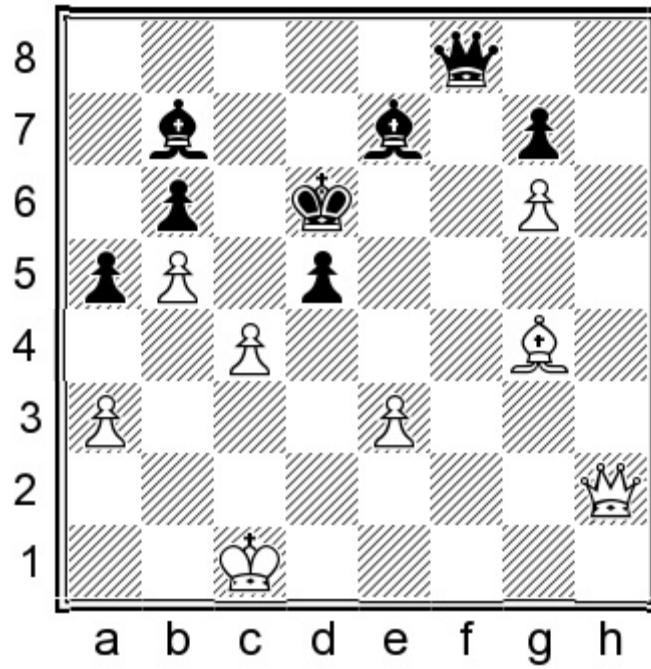
Position after: 33. ♕b2+!

33...♔d6

The king must return as advancing further ends with mate: 33...♔e4 34. ♕d4#

Now follows yet another long move with the queen!

34. ♕h2+!



Position after: 34. ♔h2+!

Again the black king is caught in the mating net.

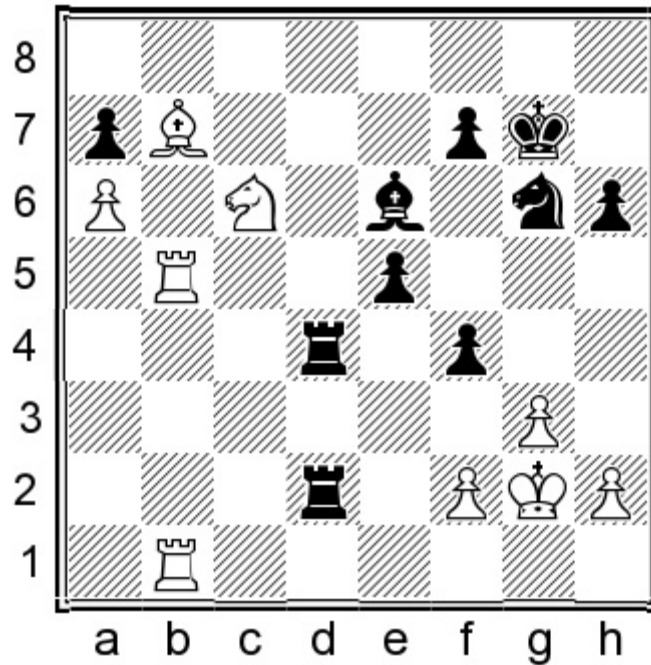
34...♙c5 35.♔c7+

1-0

Example 2

From Ornstein – Schneider

Uppsala 1985



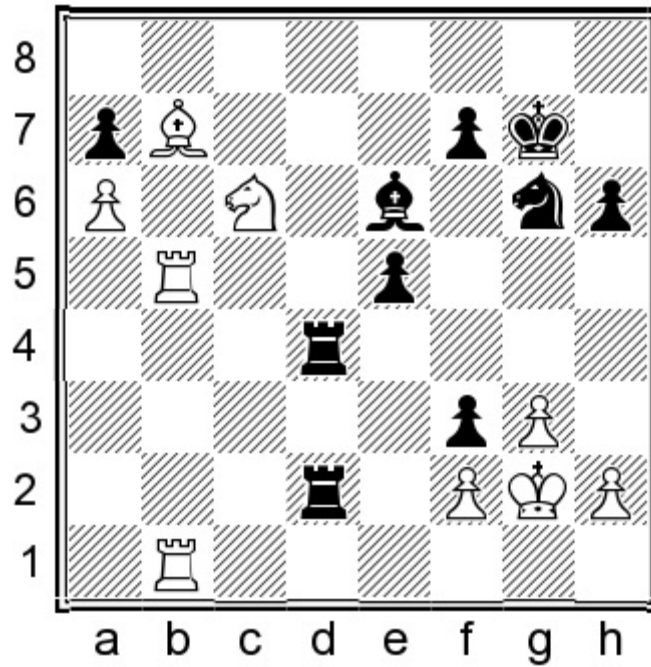
With a lot of active pieces aiming at the opponent's king, even in the endgame it is possible to attack by forcing the king into the open. But, as always, it is necessary to be precise. How to do it in this position? White has prepared everything to win the a-pawn, after which his own a-pawn would be promoted very quickly. But in order to do so, White had to drag all his pieces to the queenside when his king is defended only by pawns. Black did the opposite; he abandoned the defense of the queenside and threw all the cards into the attack on the white king. He doesn't have much time and must play energetically!

29...f3+!!

29...♔d5+? gives time for White to reduce the pressure by exchanging one of the black pieces.

30.♖xd5! ♖xd5 31.♘xa7

29...f3+!!



Position after: 29...f3+!!

The pawn sacrifice must be accepted, because otherwise Black mates quickly... The white king must leave its shelter!

30.♔xf3

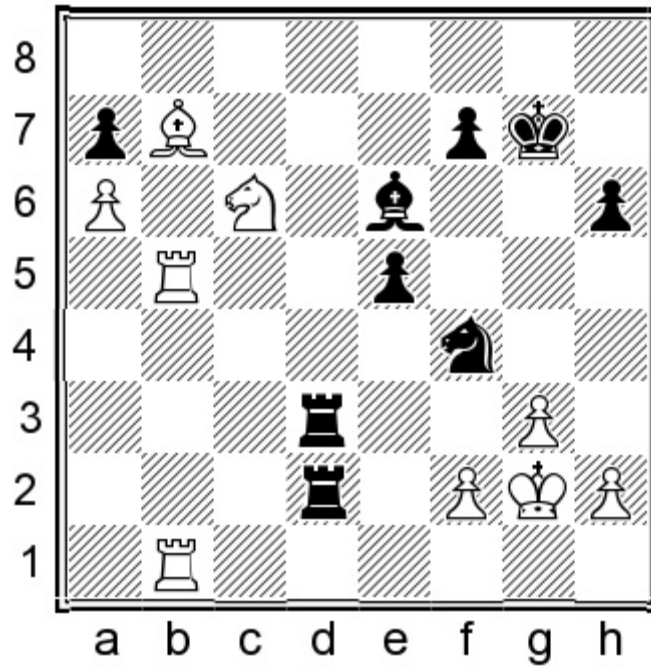
30.♔f1 ♖d1+ 31.♖xd1 ♖xd1#

30...♖4d3+! 31.♔g2

31.♔e4 f5#

It seems that the worst is over for White, but now Black reveals the point of his combination.

31...♗f4+!!

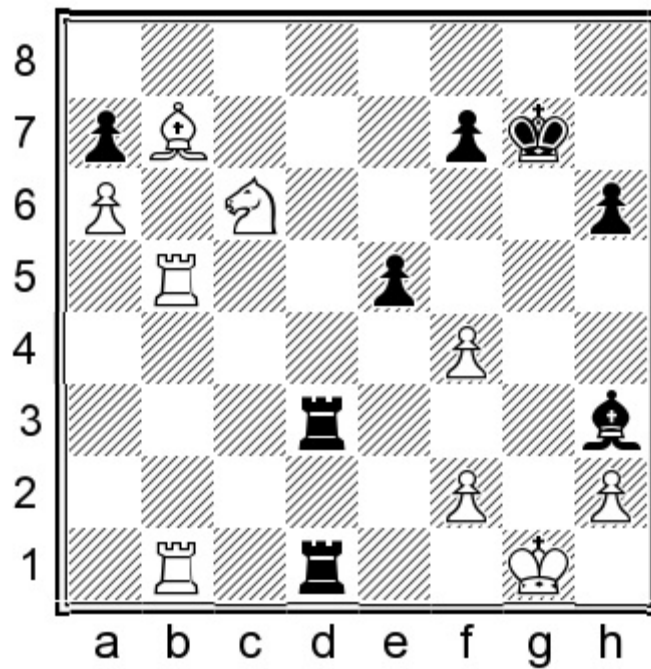


Position after: 31... Nf4+!!

32.gxf4

32.♔f1 ♖d1+ 33.♖xd1 ♖xd1#

32...♗h3+! 33.♔g1 ♖d1+



Position after: 33... ♖d1+

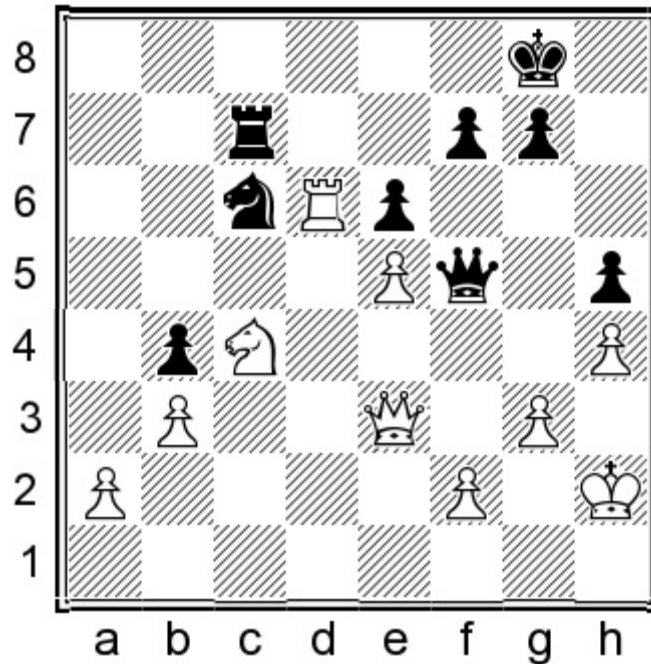
White is getting mated!

0-1

Example 3

From Mainka – Koch

Germany 2016



This example is a bit more complicated. White is a pawn up, but the realization of this advantage is quite complicated. You will see that from this seemingly peaceful position the black king will come under heavy fire.

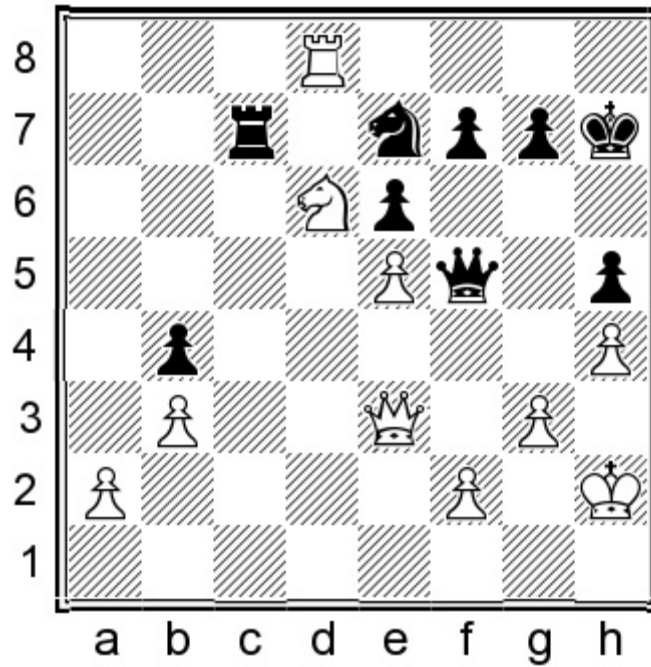
47...♞e7

White threatened the double attack ♙b6, so Black switches the knight to the great d5 stronghold, where it can also defend the rook. However, this move allows checks on the eighth rank, which gives rise to problems for the black king.

48.♞d8+

48.♙b6 ♞d5

48...♔h7 49.♞d6



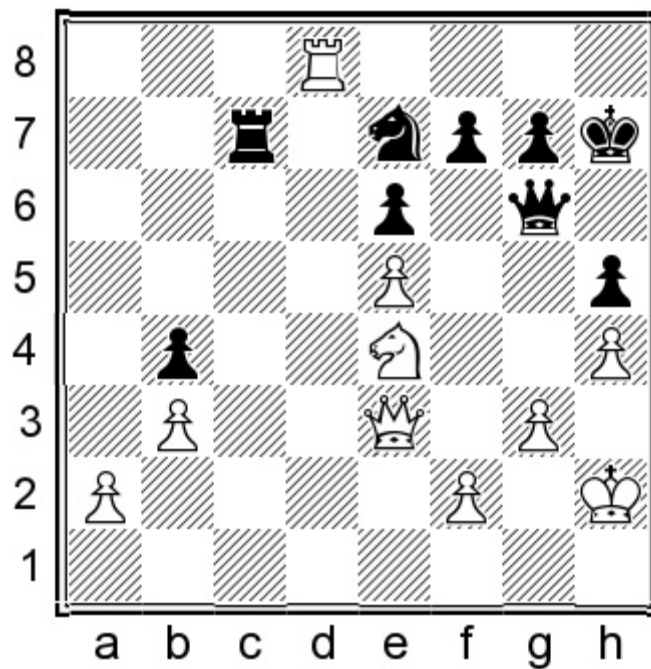
Position after: 49. ♖d6

The knight gets into the action and, as you will see, it becomes a very important piece.

49... ♔g6

The queen has to stay in touch with the f7-pawn, but it suffocates its own king.

50. ♘e4!

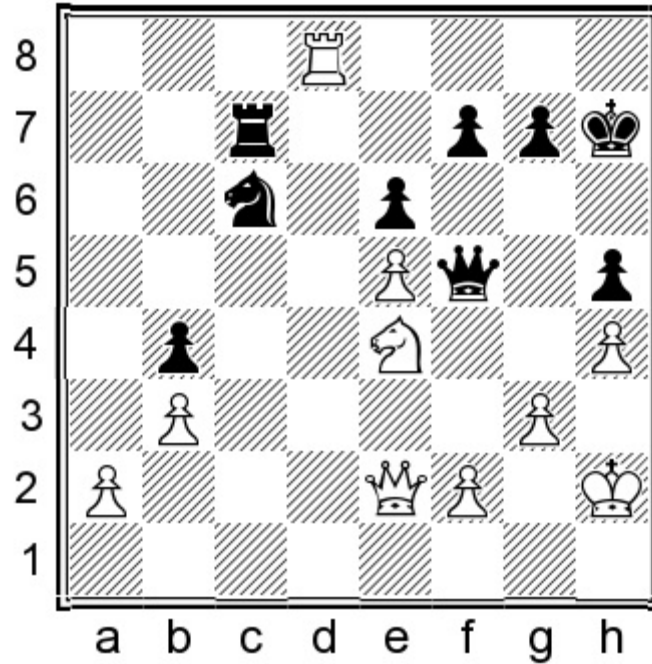


Position after: 50. ♖e4!

50... ♕f5

The unpleasant check 51. ♘g5 was threatened, so Black needed to open an escape route for his king.

51. ♕e2 ♘c6?

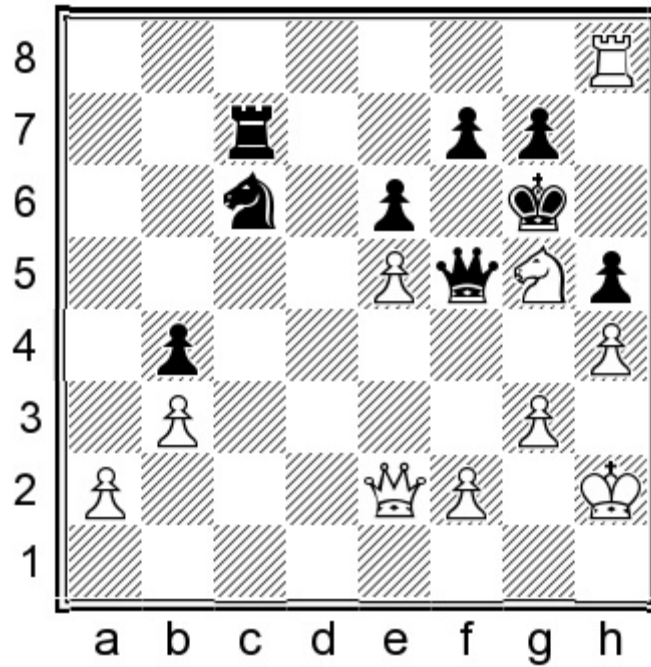


Position after: 51... ♘c6?

The decisive mistake, but Black was already in trouble.

The only defense against quick defeat was 51... ♘d5! 52. ♘g5+ ♔g6 53. ♖h8 ♕g4!.

52. ♘g5+ ♔g6 53. ♖h8!



Position after: 53. ♖h8!

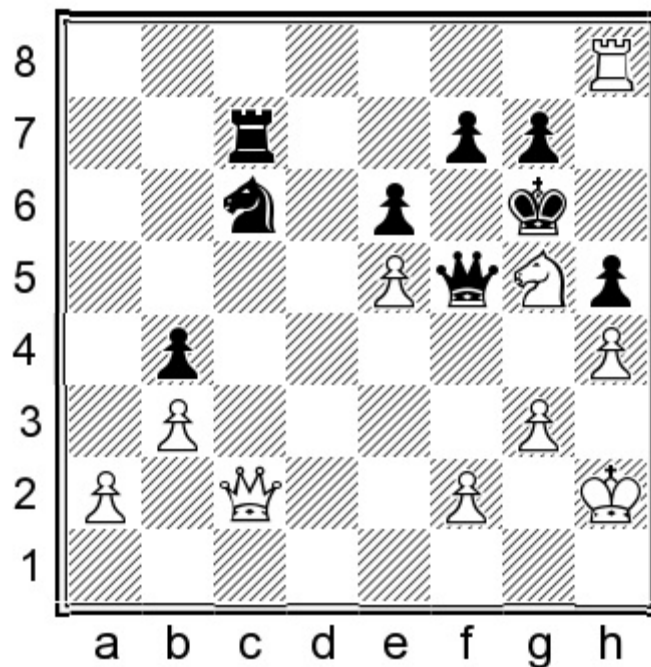
53... ♘e5

Clearing the f6 square for the black king to escape.

Black no longer saves himself after 53... ♕g4 due to

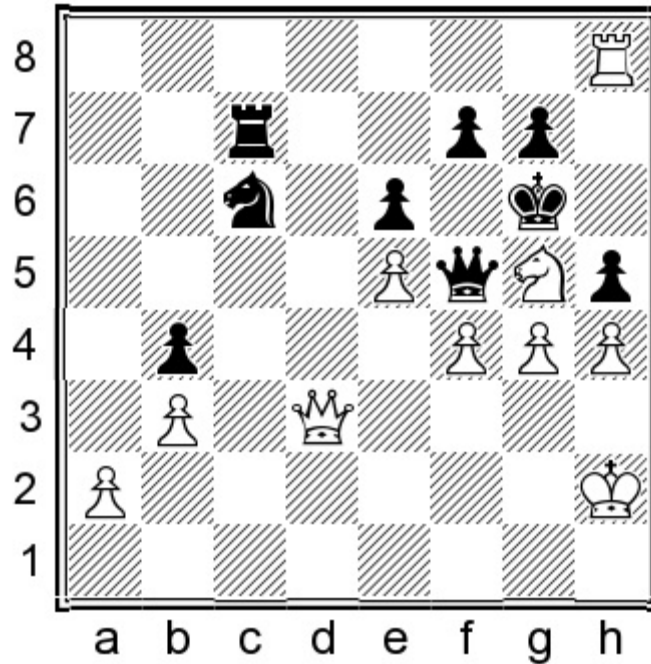
A) 54. f3 ♘d4 55. fxg4 ♘xe2 56. gxh5+

B) But there is a wonderful winning combination, albeit a more complicated one, after 54. ♕c2+! ♕f5.



Position after: 54...♔f5

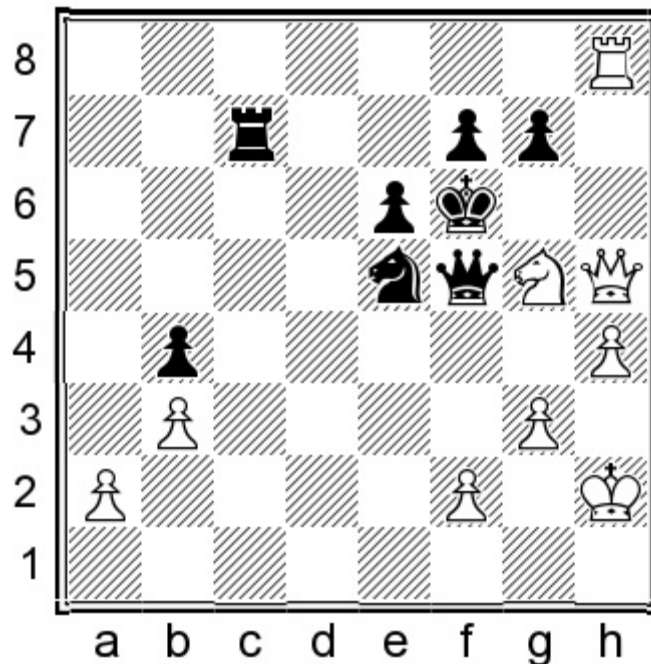
55.♕d1!! ♖g4 [55...♕xf2+ 56.♔h1! and now there is no more defense for the h5-pawn] 56.f3! Black is no longer able to jump ...♘d4 with attack on the queen. 56...♕f5 57.f4! Again the h5 pawn is under attack. 57...♖g4 58.♕d3+ ♕f5 And now comes the point of all the maneuvering. 59.g4!!



Position after: 59.g4!!

59...♕xd3 [59...hxg4 60.h5#] 60.f5+! Burying the black king! 60...exf5 61.gxh5# Mate!

54.♕xh5+ ♔f6



Position after: 54...♔f6

It looks like the black king is about to escape, and the f2-square is still under attack by the black queen.

55.♘e4+!!

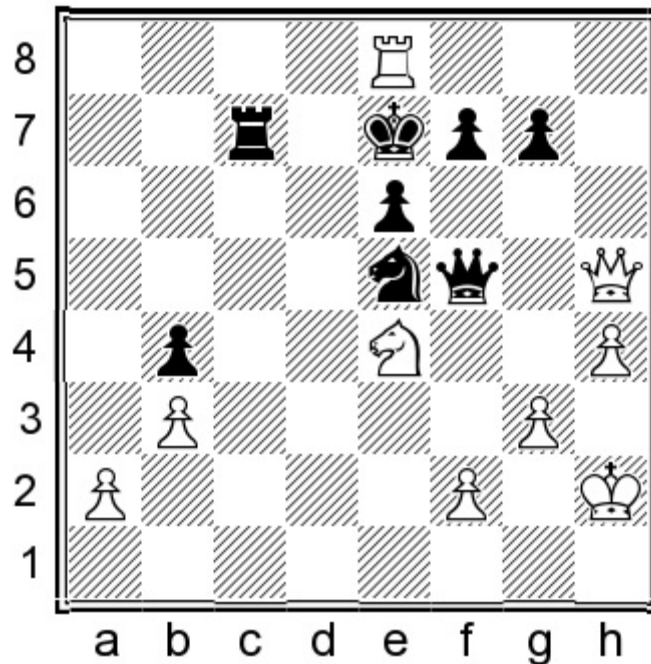
Every check should be considered!

55...♔e7

55...♙xe4 The knight on e4 is taboo because of 56.♙g5#!.

Black threatens to exchange the queens, when White's attack would be over. Somehow the impression is that White has lost the thread somewhere, but now comes the clincher.

56.♞e8+!!



Position after: 56.♞e8+!!

Knight geometry!

56...♔d7

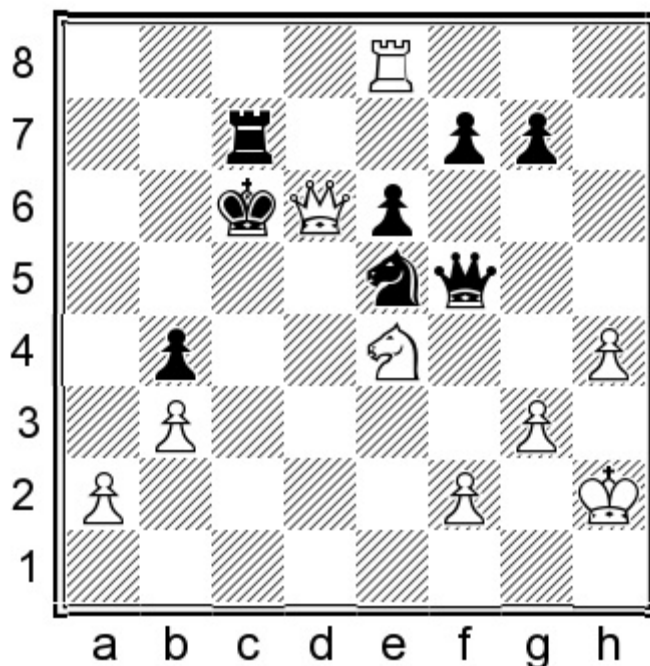
56...♔xe8 57.♘d6+ wins the black queen.

And now an important move, a long move with the queen!

57.♙d1+! ♔xe8

The queen check has attracted the black king into the knight geometry.

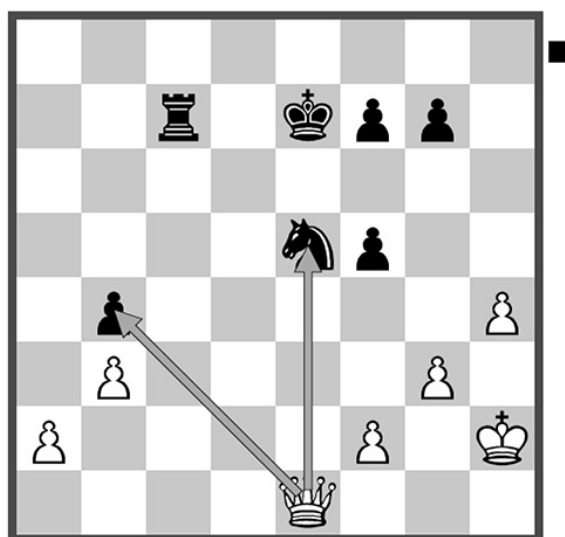
Mate is forced in case of 57...♔c6 58.♕d6+.



Position after: 58.♕d6+

58...♔b7 [58...♔b5 59.♖b8+ ♔a5 60.♕b6#] 59.♘c5+! ♖xc5 [59...♔a7 60.♕xc7#] 60.♖b8+ ♔a7 61.♕b6#.

58.♘d6+ ♔e7 59.♘xf5+ exf5 60.♕e1



Position after: 60.♕e1

Double attack plus a pin!

60...♔f6 61.♕xb4

White keeps a material plus and he is winning easily.

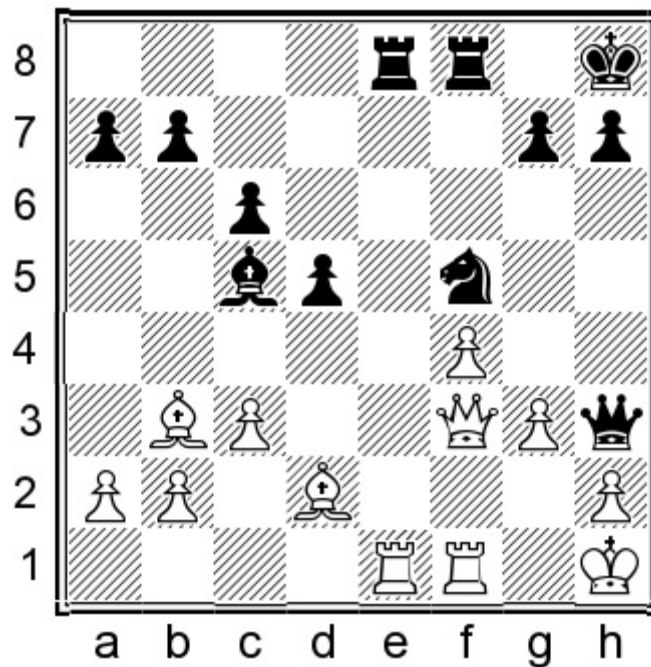
1-0

Chapter 7

Unexpected moves

Example 1

From Draskovic – Romanishin
Porto San Giorgio 2013



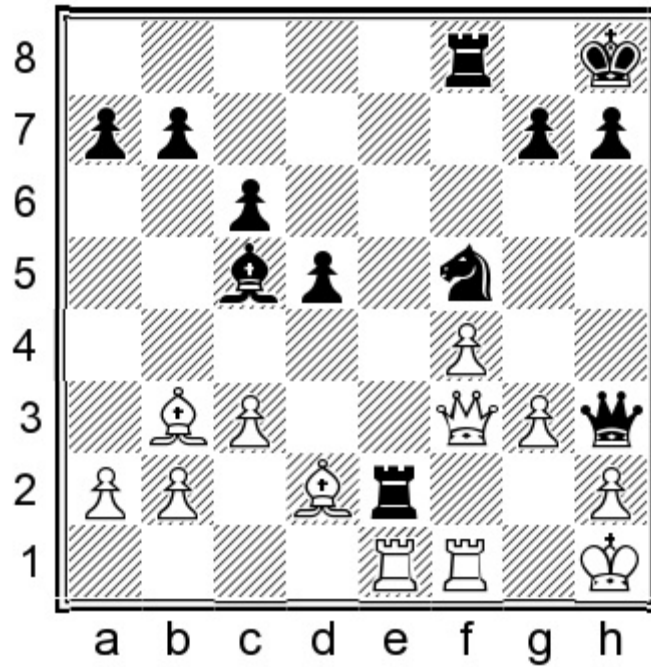
Overloaded pieces with some additional factor (such as a weak king or an unprotected piece) can lead to some unexpected moves. For example, in this position, even though the material on the board is the same, it feels like something is just not right in the white position. There are a lot of pieces that are not defended by pawns, the king is very insecure and the queen is practically holding the whole white position together so it's actually very overloaded!

As soon as one spots that an opponent's piece is overloaded, one should search for the moves that affect that overloaded piece. If we check the captures and checks, we quickly come to the conclusion that these are not the right moves for the candidates list. It's time for a move that poses a threat! How to find it?

Let's analyze the white pieces for a moment. If there were no white queen on f3 then ... $\text{N} \times \text{g}3+$ would win for Black. How about the rook on e1? It's much the same, ... $\text{N} \times \text{g}3+$ would win because after the white queen takes the knight, the rook on f1 would be unprotected. That means we should look for a move that affects these two pieces, while also posing a threat.

Now, it's certainly easier for you to find the winning move

22... $\text{R} \times \text{e}2!!$



Position after: 22...♖e2!!

An unexpected move onto a twice-controlled square, but this move completely destroys White, and would certainly have been a terrible shock to him!

23.♖xe2

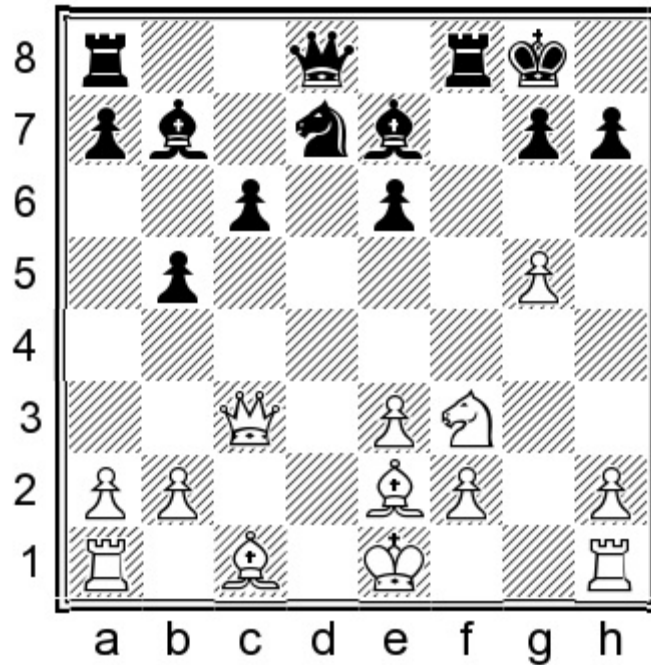
23.♚xe2 ♘xg3#

23...♘xg3+ 24.♚xg3 ♚xf1+

0-1

Example 2

From Akobian – Adhiban
Khanty-Mansiysk 2017



In order to develop a refined eye for tactics, it is important that you notice anything unnatural in your opponent's position so that the unexpected moves will come to your mind. As I have already pointed out, potentially unprotected pieces are all those not defended by the pawns. In this position, that's the white knight on f3. It is also important to spot that the black b7-bishop is actually a strong, developed piece, and even though it is currently attacking its own pawn, the h1-rook can feel the presence of the black bishop.

The queen on c3 is exposed and remember, if due to some circumstances the queen finds herself in front of its pieces and developed past the first two ranks, then you should carefully watch out for some tactics. It is also important here to develop your imagination and to feel the setup on the e1-a5 diagonal where the white queen and king are. If a black bishop appears on that diagonal White is in trouble. Based on all that information, let's take a look at what actually happened in the game. The white pawn on g5 is attacked and White logically defends it, but if he knew what was waiting for him, he would surely have fought against the greater threat!

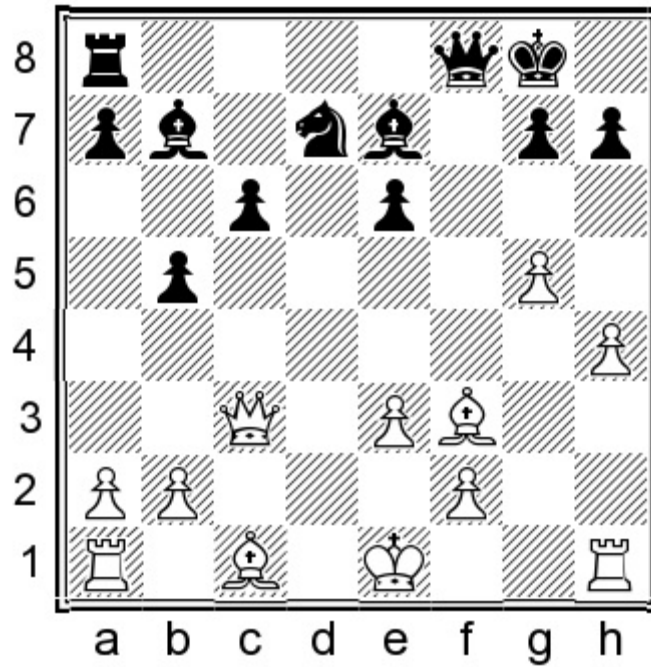
14.h4

And although both players are strong grandmasters, Black handled the information better and noticed the possibility of an unexpected move!

14...♖xf3!!

The bolt from the blue!

15.♔xf3 ♕f8!!



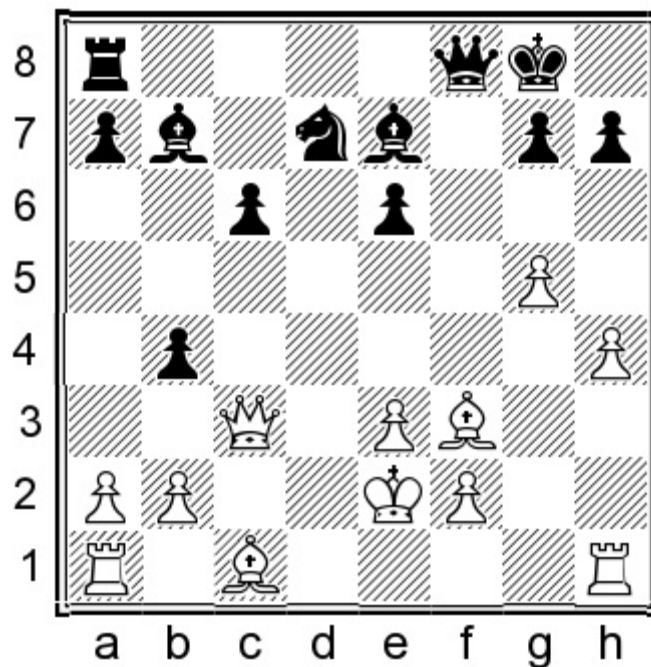
Position after: 15...♙f8!!

Double attack! An unprotected piece combined with the threat of pinning the white queen. White is forced into the only move that seems to ward off both threats.

16.♙e2!

But now comes another blow!

16...b4!



Position after: 16...b4!

Black's light-squared bishop enters the game with the threat of distracting the white king from the defense of his bishop.

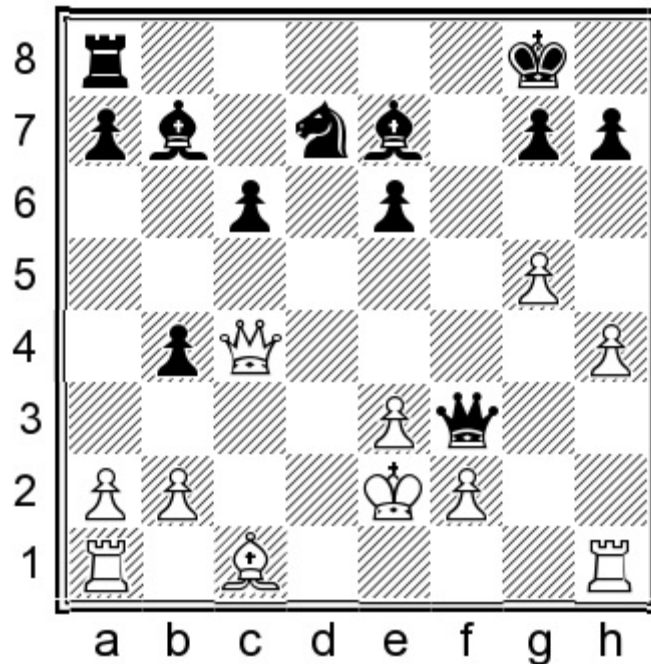
16...♗a6 would not be good because of 17.♕xc6!.

Therefore, White meets this plan with

17.♕c4

but now comes another motif.

17...♕xf3+!!



Position after: 17...♕xf3+!!

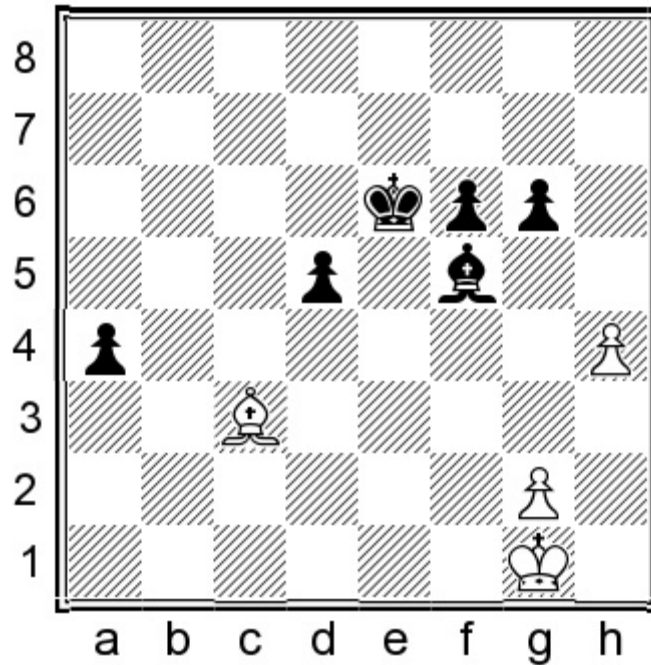
The unprotected white queen allows a tactical combination using knight geometry!

18.♔xf3 ♖e5+ 19.♔g3 ♖xc4

The smoke has cleared and Black is left with a material advantage that he easily converted.

0-1

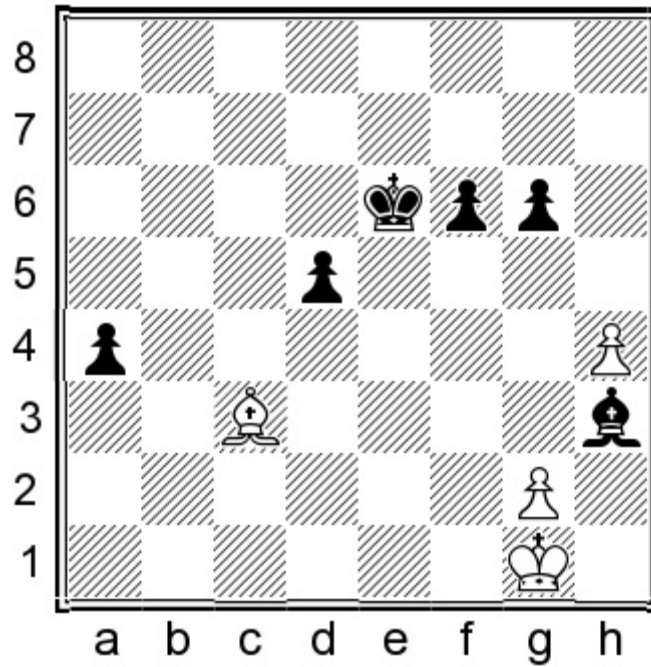
Example 3
From Topalov – Shirov
Linares 1998



Unexpected moves do not just appear out of the blue. They come as the result of players analyzing intensively and using their imagination. Here, White wants to control the black d-pawn in such a way that he can approach the e3-square with his king, after which the opposite-colored bishops would make that foot soldier immovable.

So Black should act quickly. How to get the king on e4 before White gets there first? Black's own f5-bishop is in the way, but if it moves then White is just on time to be first into the centre. Is there any way to do it at the cost of giving up material? What if we think a little philosophically and remove from the board the black bishop and the white g2-pawn? Let's see what would happen in that case if it were White to move and what if it were Black's turn? After you have convinced yourself what would happen, it is easier for you to understand why Shirov found a brilliant unexpected blow.

47...♔h3!!

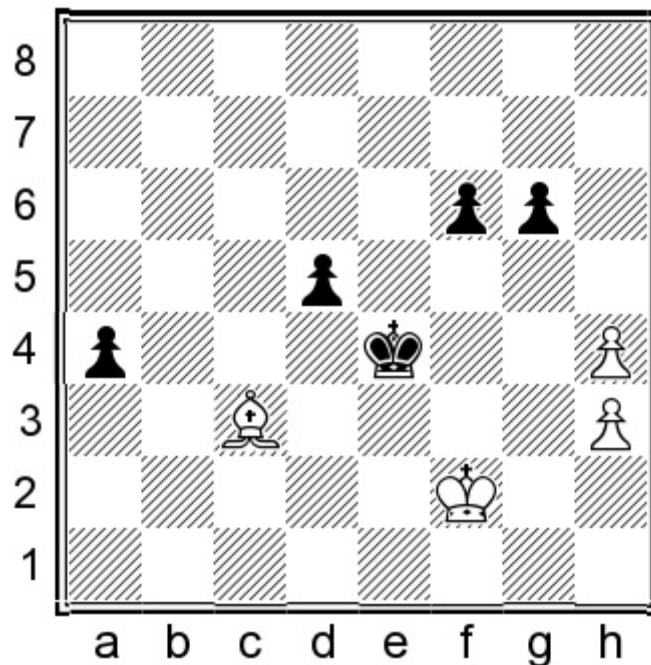


Position after: 47...♔h3!!

48.gxh3

White is forced to accept the bishop sacrifice because he would lose his pawn if he runs to the e3-square. 48.♔f2 ♔f5 49.♔e3 ♔xg2

48...♔f5! 49.♔f2 ♔e4



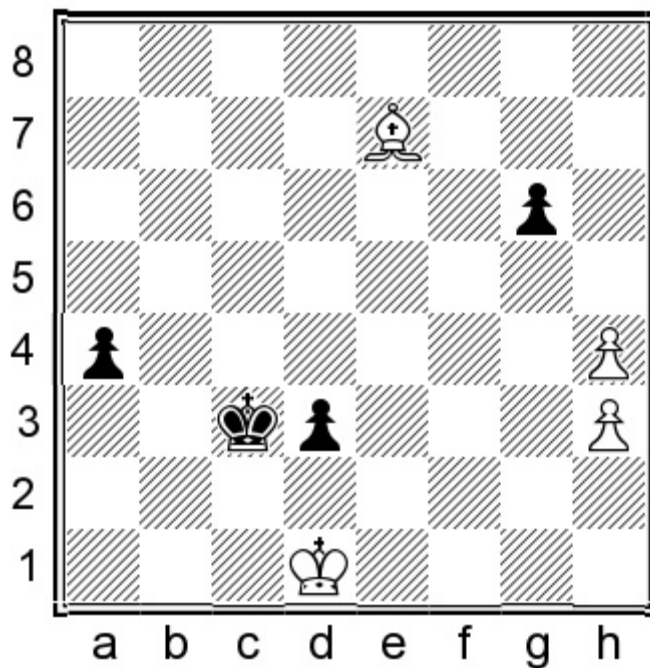
Position after: 49...♔e4

Mission accomplished!

50.♙xf6 d4 51.♙e7 ♔d3!

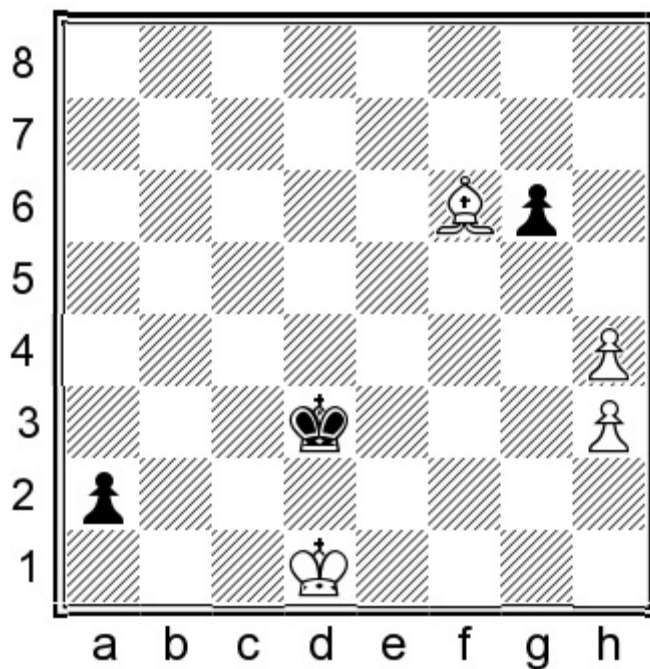
A very important move – it is essential to prevent a blockade by White!

51...d3 52.♙b4 ♔d4 53.♚e1 ♔c4 54.♙e7 ♔c3 55.♚d1 And a blockade has been put in place.



Position after: 55.♚d1

55...d2 56.♙g5 a3 57.♙xd2+ ♔d3 58.♙g5 a2 59.♙f6



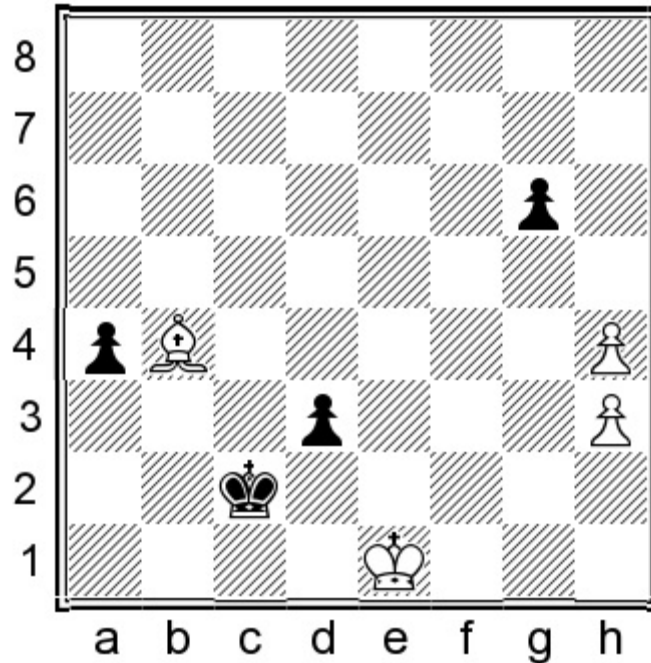
Position after: 59. ♖f6

And it is important that the white bishop can control the promotion square for the h-pawn (h8), which guarantees victory for him.

52. ♖c5

The bishop prevents Black from coming to the c2-square, but he manages to get there all the same.

52. ♖e1 ♜c2 53. ♖c5 d3 54. ♖b4



Position after: 54. ♖b4

54...a3! And by distracting the bishop Black wins!

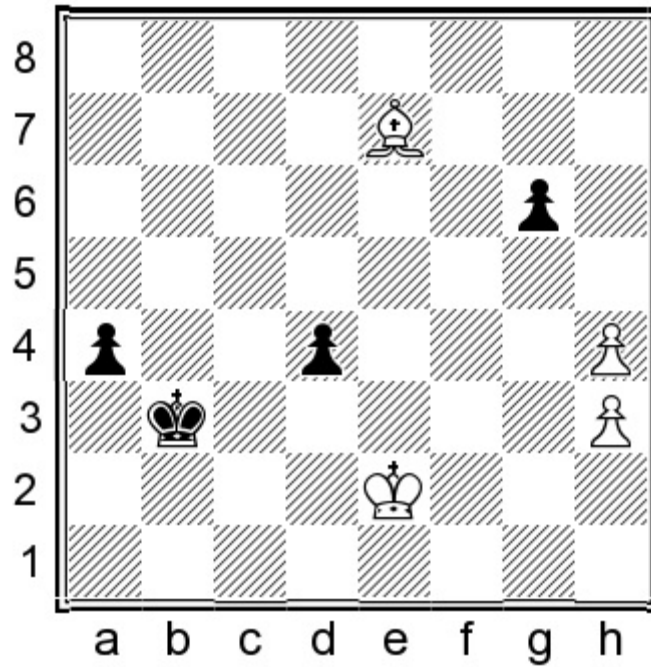
52... ♜c4! 53. ♖e7

White must keep his bishop on the a3-f8 diagonal to control the a-pawn.

53... ♜b3

Also good was 53... ♜c3.

54. ♖e2

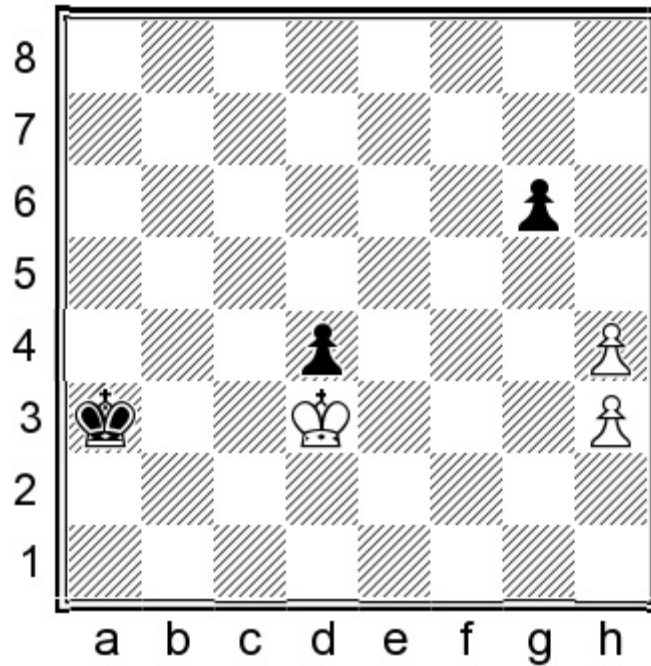


Position after: 54. ♔e2

54...♔c2!

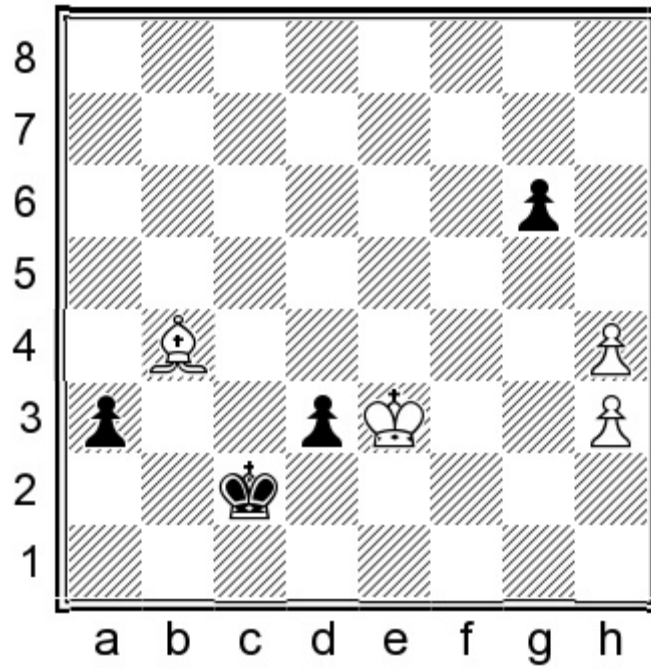
And the king has ended up on the key square, so now Black is easily winning,

But not 54...a3?? due to 55. ♙xa3! ♔xa3 56. ♔d3.



Position after: 56. ♔d3

55. ♙b4 d3+ 56. ♔e3 a3!



Position after: 56...a3!

White's bishop cannot defend both sides at once.

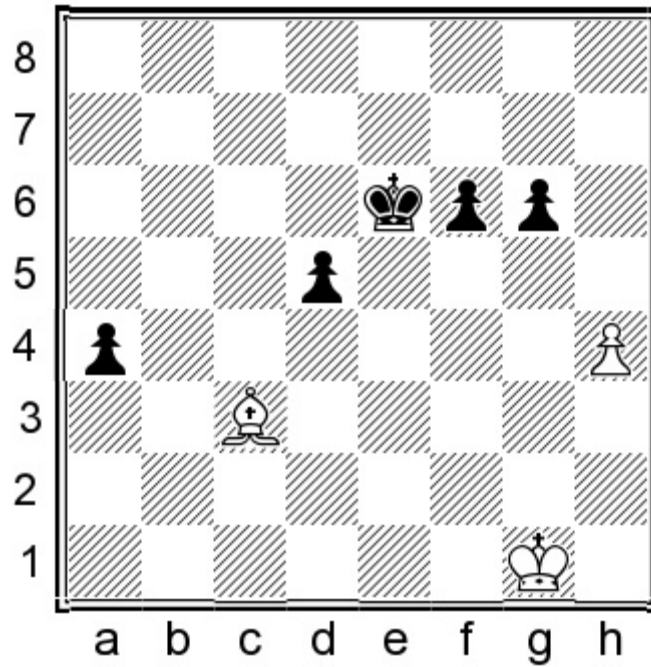
57. ♖xa3 d2

0-1

Example 4

Based on Topalov – Shirov

Linares 1998

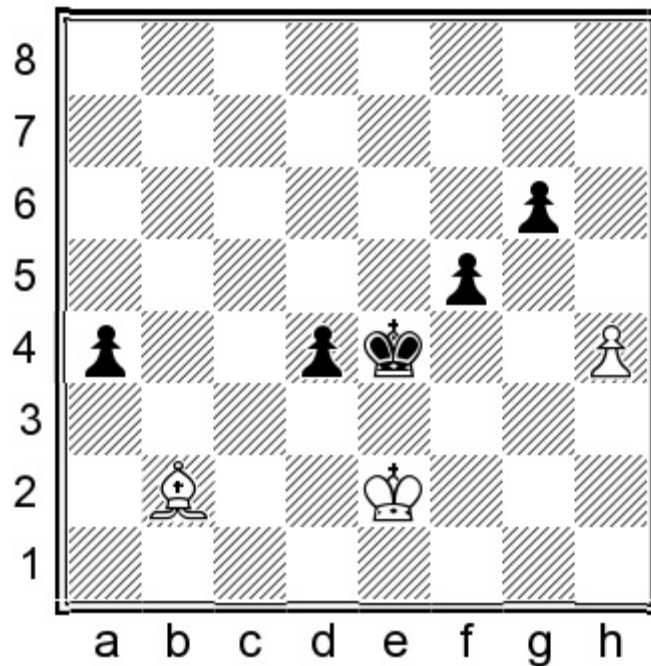


What would happen in this position if it were Black's turn to move?

47...♙f5 48.♙f2 ♔e4!

Black was able to support the d-pawn and allow it to move.

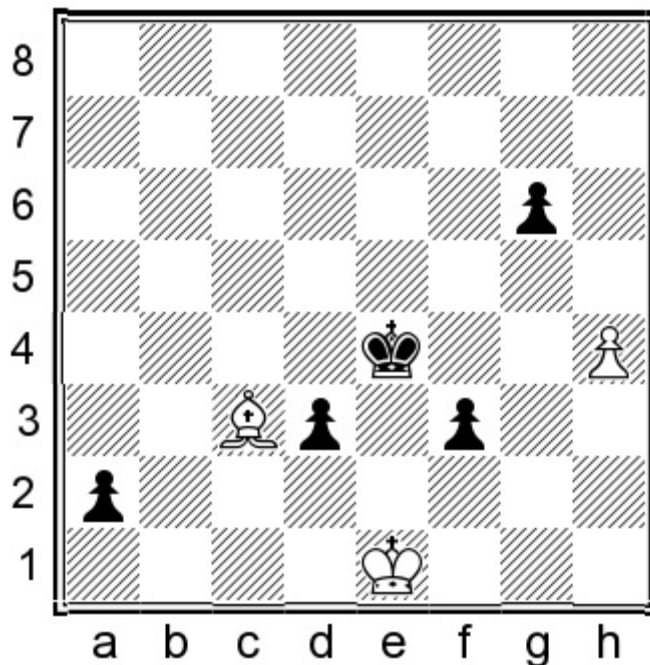
49.♙e2 d4 50.♘b2 f5



Position after: 50...f5

Now another pawn gets involved in the race, which spells doom for White.

51.♔d2 f4 52.♔e2 f3+ 53.♔f2 d3 54.♙c3 a3 55.♔e1 a2



Position after: 55...a2

Now White is maximally passive!

56.♙b2 ♔d5

It's time to maneuver with the king.

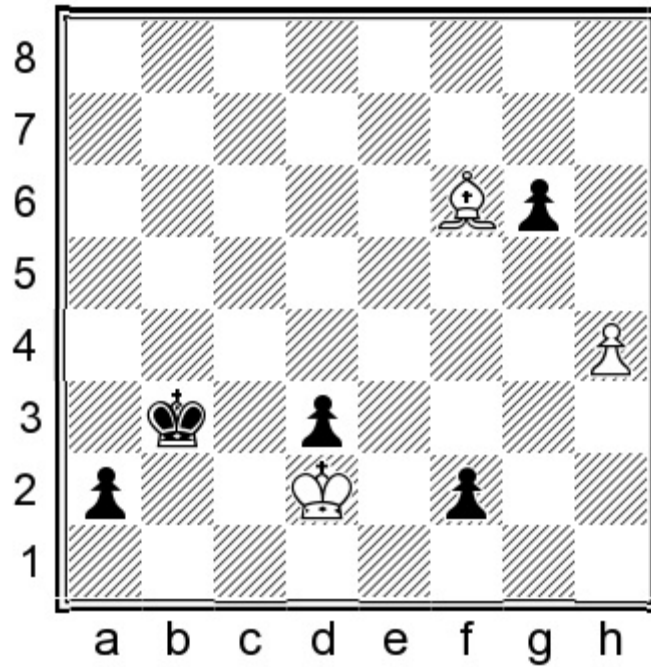
57.♙a1 ♔c4 58.♙f6 ♔b3

The black pawns on d3 and f3 are electric pawns, as explained earlier in this book. If the white king approaches one of the pawns, the other pawn advances and is indirectly defended by its colleague.

59.♔d2

59.♙a1 ♔c2 And when the king comes to b1 the pawn promotion cannot be stopped.

59...f2!



Position after: 59...f2!

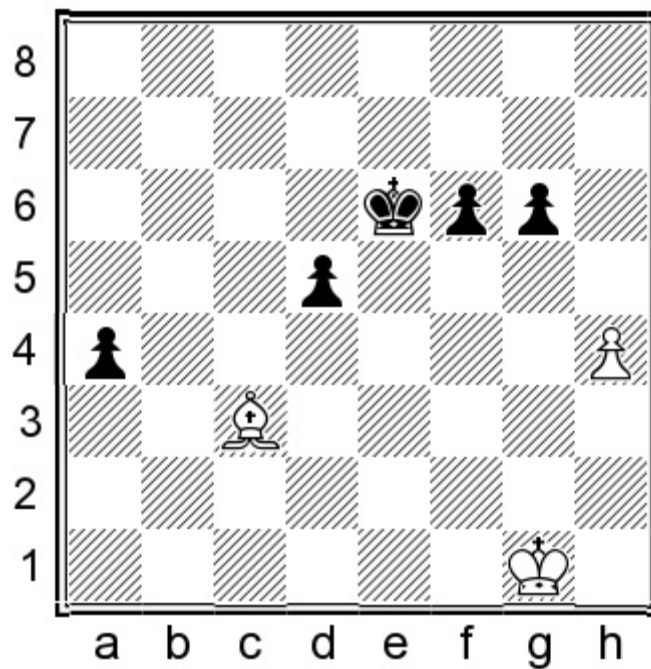
The electric pawns are untouchable and Black wins.

0-1

Example 5

Based on Topalov – Shirov

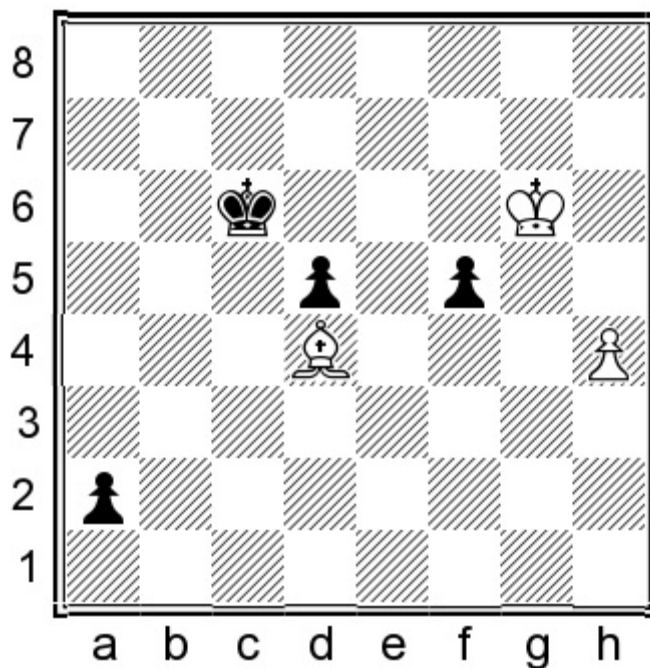
Linares 1998



But what happens if White is on the move?

47.♔f2 ♕f5

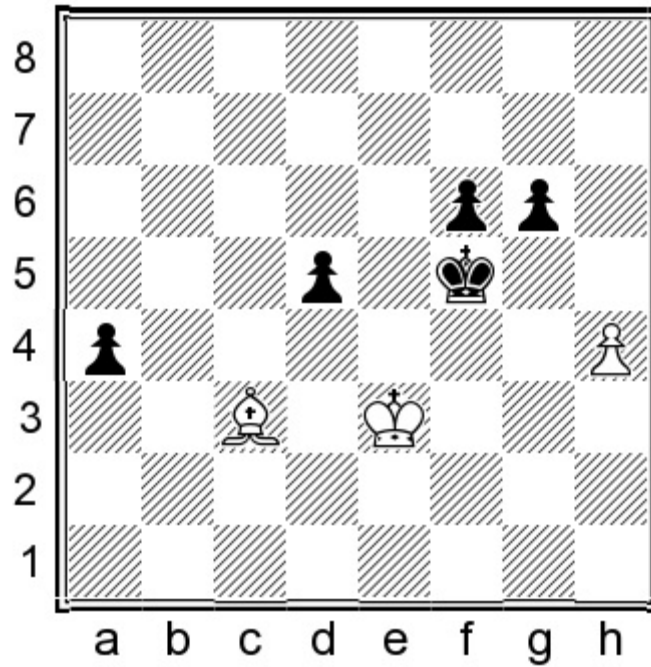
47...f5 has the idea of defending that pawn so that the black king can try to support the advance of the a-pawn, but it doesn't give more than a draw after 48.♕e3 ♔d6 49.♘d4 ♕c6 50.♔f4 a3 51.♕g5 a2 52.♕xg6



Position after: 52.♕xg6

52...f4 53.h5 f3 54.h6 f2 55.h7 f1=♚ 56.h8=♚. White is just in time to promote the queen and increase the defense of the a1-square, where Black wants to queen another pawn.

48.♕e3



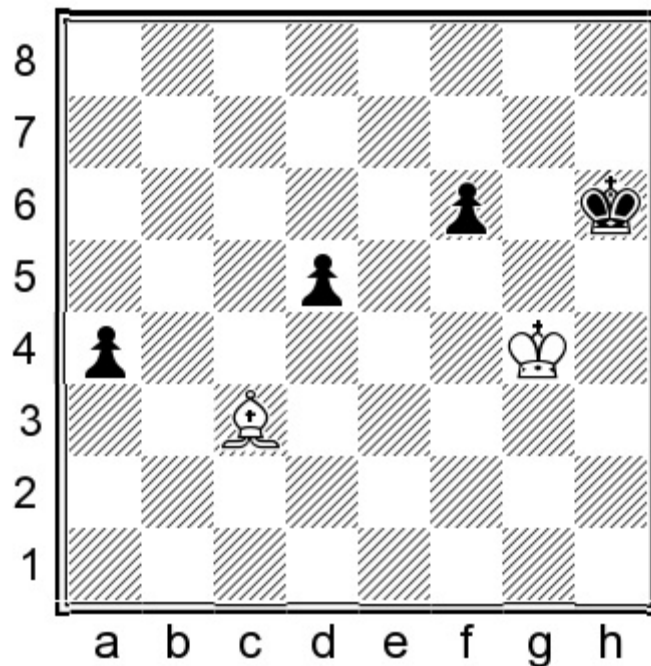
Position after: 48. ♔e3

48...g5

A) 48...♔g4 49.♙xf6 and the game will end up in a draw.

B) 48...a3 49.♔f3 g5 50.h5 g4+ 51.♔g3 ♔g5 52.h6 ♔xh6 53.♔xg4 Again it's a draw.

49.h5 g4 50.h6 ♔g6 51.♔f4 ♔xh6 52.♔xg4



Position after: 52. ♔xg4

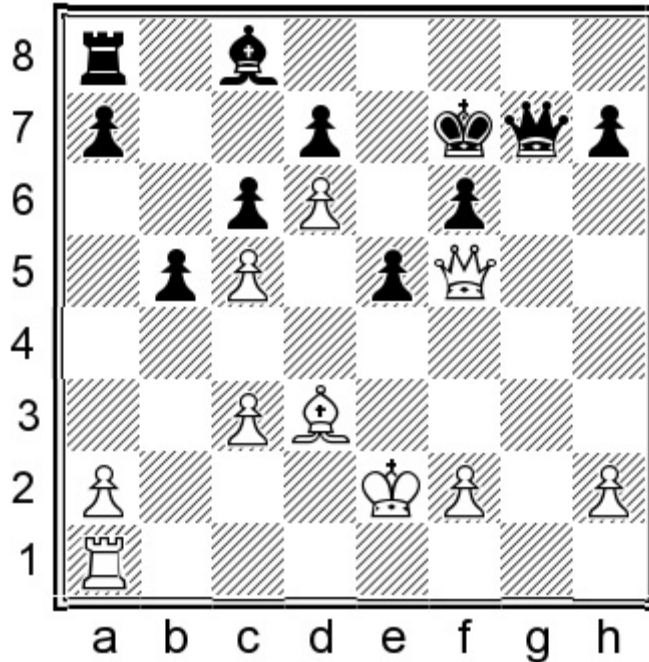
And Black can't win because White is securely controlling the movement of the black pawns.

½-½

Example 6

From Carlsen – Vachier Lagrave

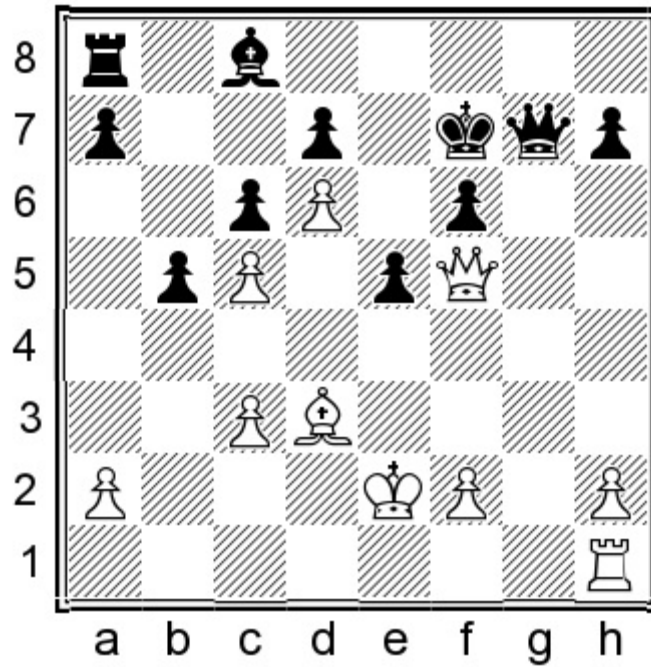
Leuven 2017



This example shows how strong the World Champion Magnus Carlsen is, when he finds an unexpected move even in a game with a fast control! White attacks the black king, which is quite insecure as the pieces on his queenside are cut off. White needs to act quickly because Black is threatening to bring his pieces into play within a few moves.

You also need to learn to “talk” with your pieces! What does that mean? Well, at this point, if you were in Carlsen’s shoes and asked each of your pieces whether it was satisfied with its position, everyone would be satisfied except for the rook at a1! Chess symbolizes a kind of battle between two armies. Let’s imagine that you are fighting an uncertain battle, and your strongest cannon is in the garage waiting to be told how the war has ended! Well, this rook is in a similar position, but how do you get it into the action? If you asked it where it would like to come, it would give you the answer: to the g-file! But how to do it? Unexpected moves are not strange to the World Champion!

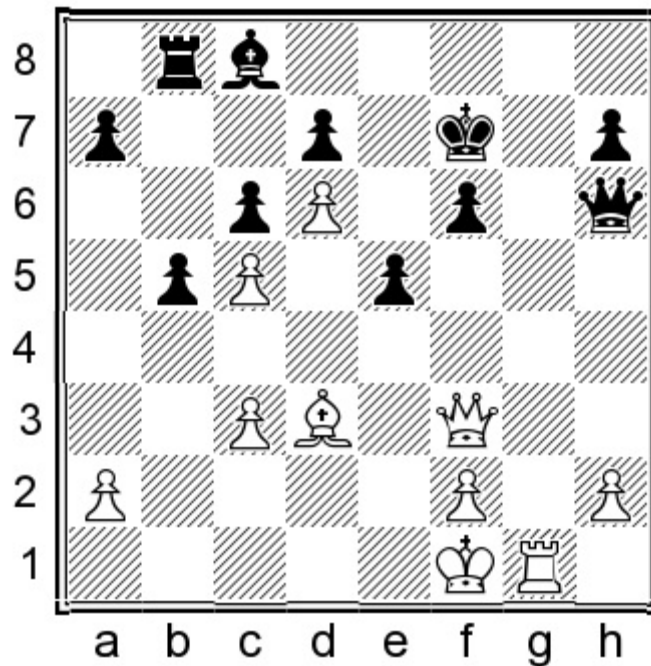
26. ♖h1



Position after: 26. ♖h1

There is only the one way to get to the g1-square with the rook and it's this way. The passive rook becomes very active only in two moves!

26... ♜b8 27. ♔f1! ♚g6 28. ♙f3 ♛h6 29. ♖g1



Position after: 29. ♖g1

The goal is achieved!

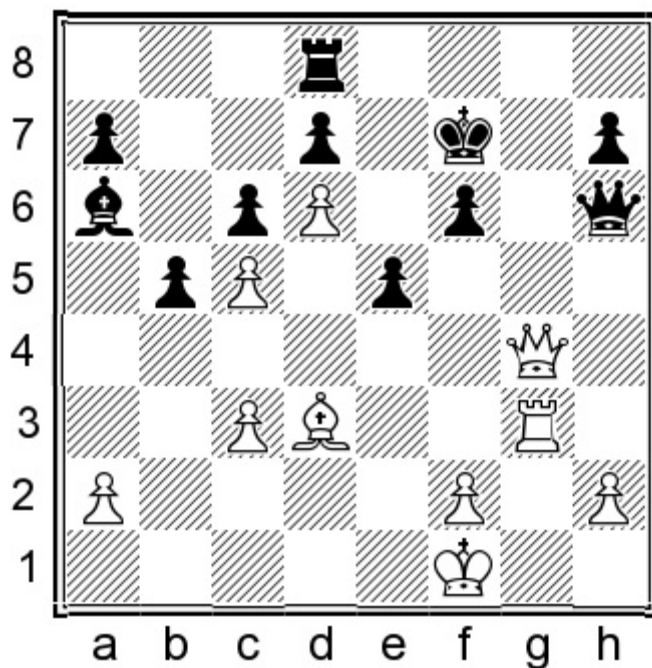
29...♔a6

29...♕c1+ 30.♖g2 ♕xc3 31.♗h1 gave Black nothing. He has snaffled one crummy pawn, while White has taken his king to safety and continues to build up threats against his opponent.

30.♗g4 ♝d8

The only way to defend the d7-pawn properly.

31.♞g3!

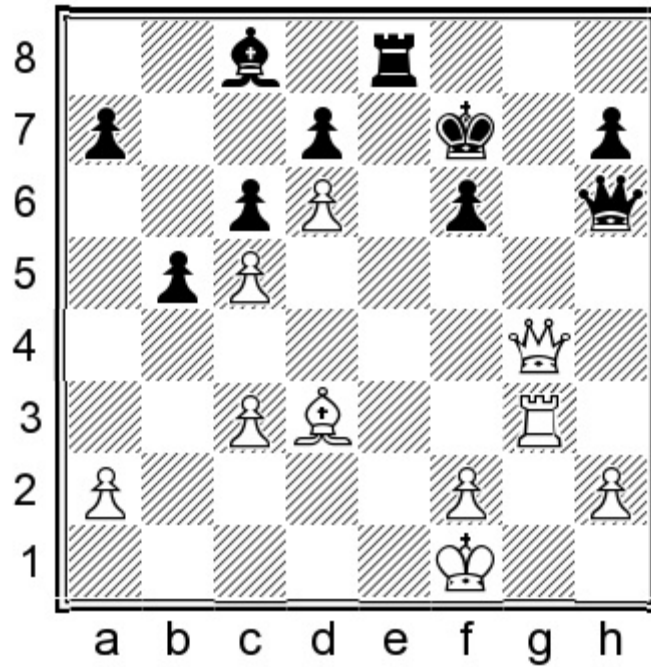


Position after: 31.♞g3!

A further activation of the rook, which is now ready to punish Black along the h-file!

31...e4 32.♕xe4 ♝e8 33.♗g4 ♔c8

Since decisions are made in a second, Carlsen misses the chance to crown his previous fantastic play with the final touch.

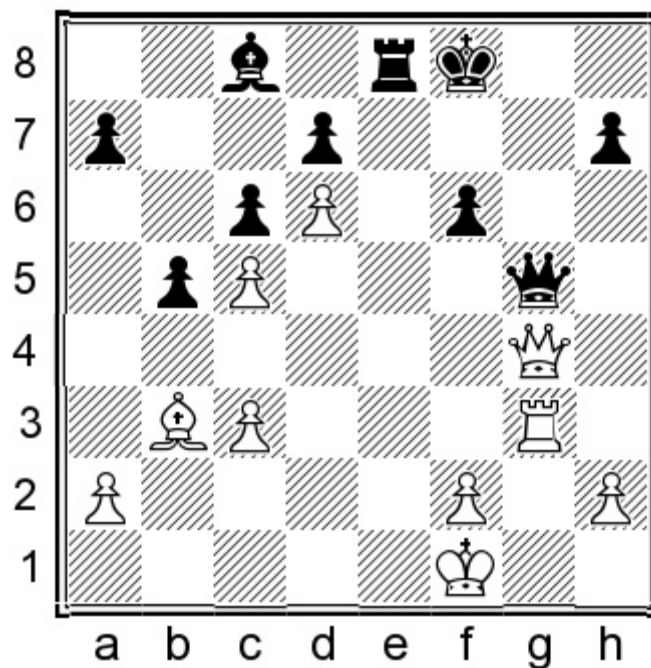


Position after: 33...♔c8

Instead, he decides to take his advantage into the endgame.

34.♔g2

Yet the move 34.♔c2! would completely seal Black's fate because after 34...♖c1+ [34...♗g5 35.♔b3+ ♔f8



Position after: 35...♔f8

36. ♖f4!! Unexpected move!] 35. ♗d1 Black is defenseless [also good enough is 35. ♔g2].

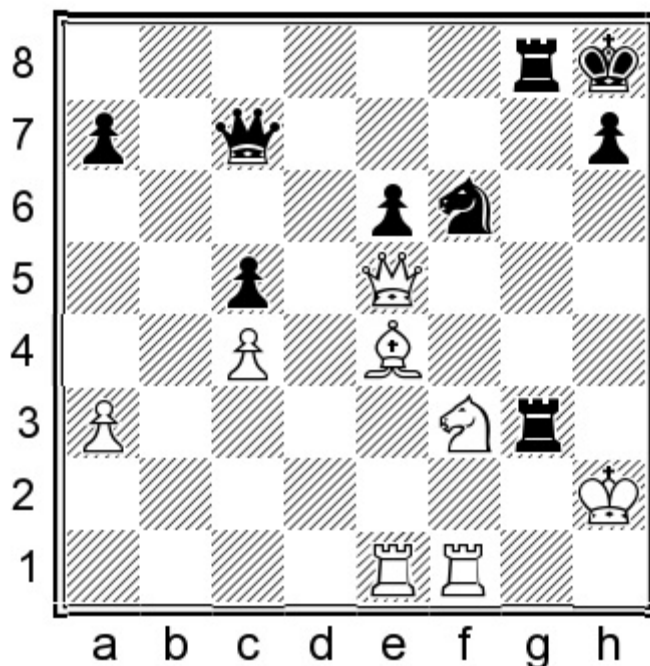
34... ♖g5 35. ♖f3 ♗d5 36. ♖xd5+ cxd5 37. ♗xh7

And Carlsen won the game in a few more moves.

1-0

Example 7

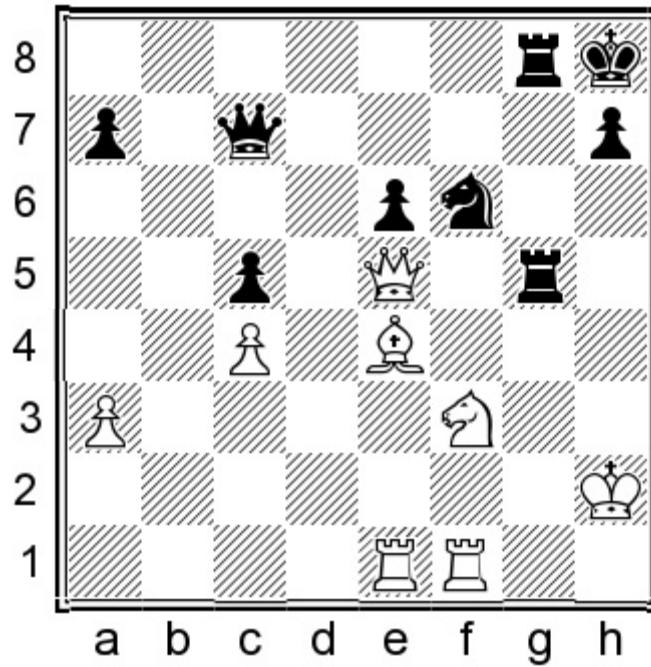
From Morozov – Minasian
Yerevan 2018



For unexpected moves it is important not to play under the mantra “You attacked me – I defend myself”. No, that’s not the goal of this book. The goal is to take you to a level above this obvious level where this type of chess is played. White offered to exchange the queens and now the typical thinking would be: will I exchange the queens or retreat? But this is the level where I don’t want you to be! You should seek other options.

The white king is quite naked and it feels some x-ray effect of the black queen on c7. It also has to worry about the knight geometry involving the square g4 (but it is not possible now because of the pin by the white queen). White’s king is also unprotected on the g- and h-files, and transferring one rook to the h-file could be a dangerous mating threat. There are many factors in the air and therefore the impossible can become possible! The unexpected solution is...

31... ♖3g5!!

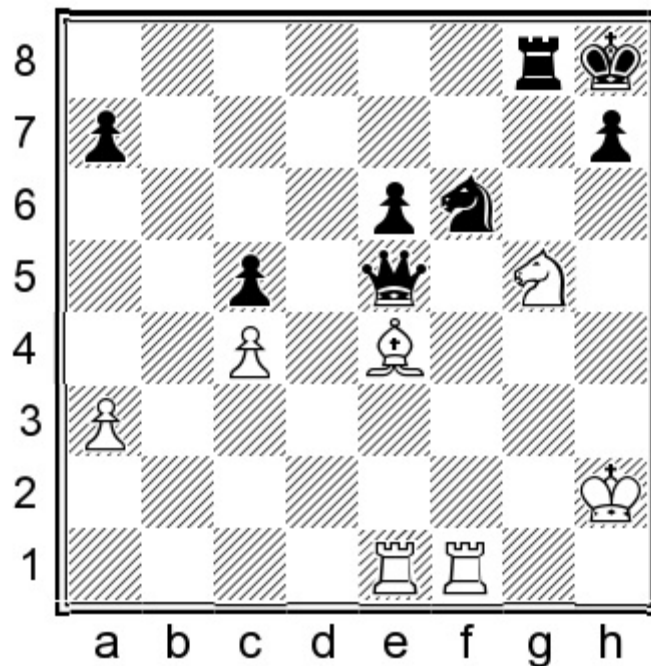


Position after: 31...♖3g5!!

31...♔g7 would be the move that anyone who knows how to play chess would make. But this is the visible (obvious) level, and I want you to go to a higher, invisible level after reading this book!

32.♔xc7

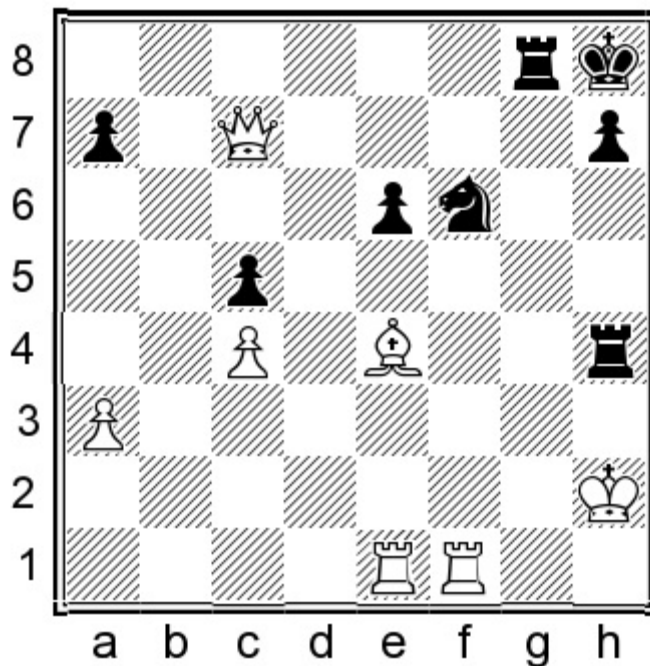
32.♞xg5 ♔xe5+



Position after: 32...♔xe5+

The queen must be taken, but then follows

32...♖h5+ 33.♘h4 ♖xh4#



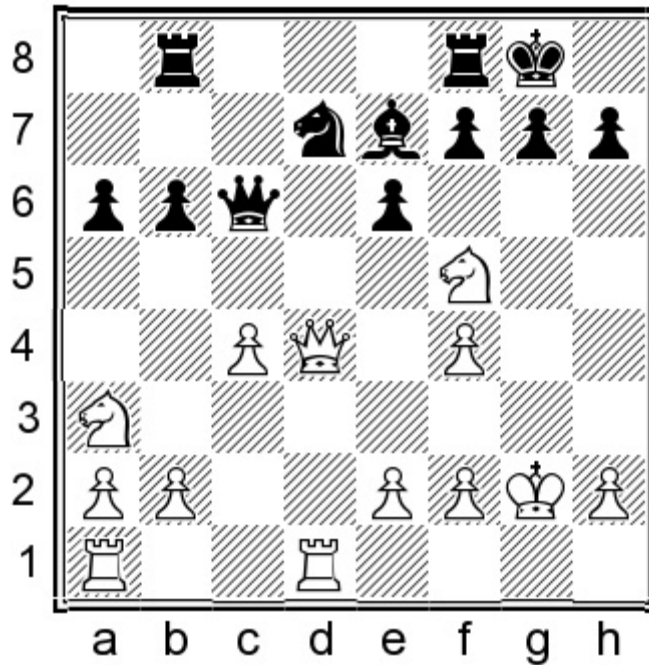
Position after: 33...♖xh4#

Mate!

0-1

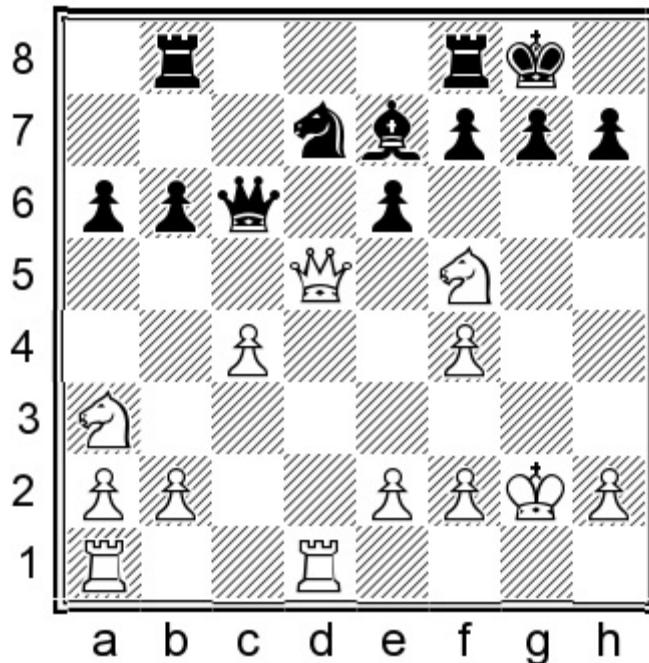
Example 8

Analysis from Ivanisevic – Oberhofer
Neustadt an der Weinstrasse 2018



White's king is in check and at the "visible" level White would move his king, but after that Black eliminates the dangerous knight on f5. If the king were not in check, that knight would have carried out its knight geometry, which would be disastrous for Black. How to keep the knight alive? The solution is an unexpected move!

1. ♔d5!!



Position after: 1. ♔d5!!

Now Black doesn't have time to remove the knight because his queen is unprotected.

1.♔g1 exf5 2.♚xd7 ♚g6+ 3.♔f1 ♚f6 The resulting position is weaker for White.

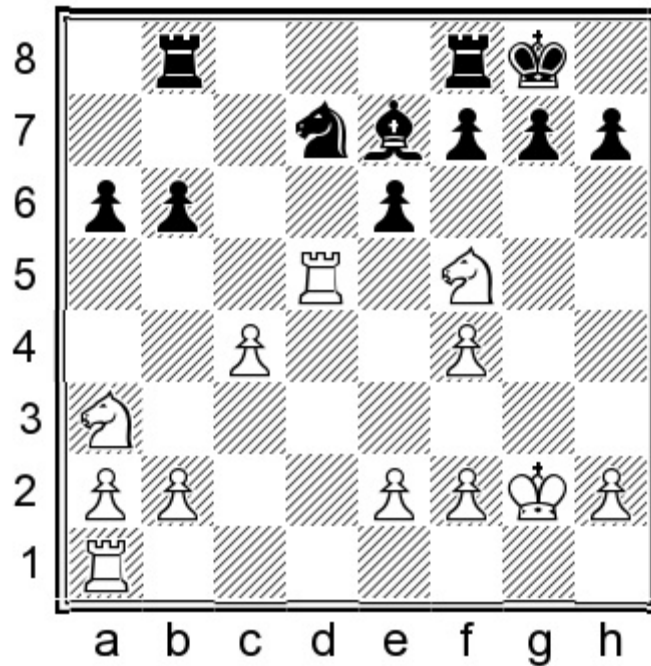
1.♚d5!! ♚xd5+

1...exd5? 2.♘xe7+ ♔h8 3.♘xc6 and White has won a piece!

White does not seem to have achieved anything as it is check again and the white knight falls, but unexpected move number two follows!

2.♙xd5!!

2.cxd5 exf5 would be bad for White.

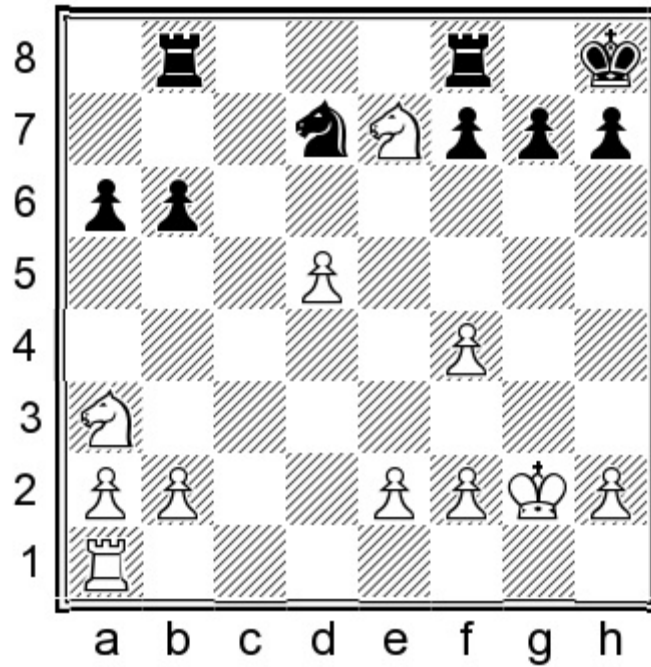


Position after: 2.♙xd5!!

2...exd5

2...exf5 3.♙xd7 And White is a pawn up.

3.♘xe7+ ♔h8 4.cxd5

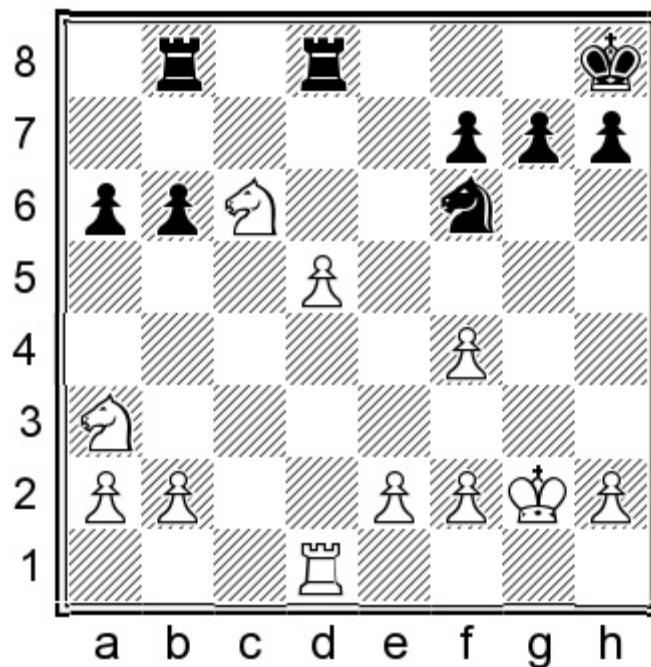


Position after: 4.cxd5

And White has two pawns for the exchange (knight or bishop for the rook is called the exchange) and the game could further develop as follows.

4...♞f6 5.♞d1 ♜bd8

Of course not the other rook because of the obvious knight geometry 5...♜fd8 6.♞c6!

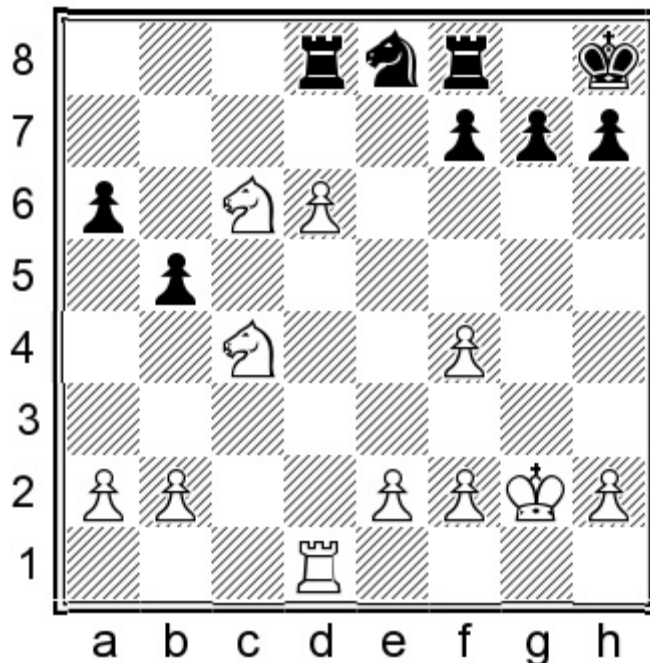


Position after: 6.♞c6!

6.d6 ♖e8 7.♗c4

Pushing the pawn will only cost White: 7.d7 ♗f6! and the pawn falls.

7...b5 8.♗c6



Position after: 8.♗c6

8...♖d7

The rook must remain on the d-file. If Black plays 8...♖c8? the pawn promotes: 9.d7 ♖xc6 10.d8=♔.

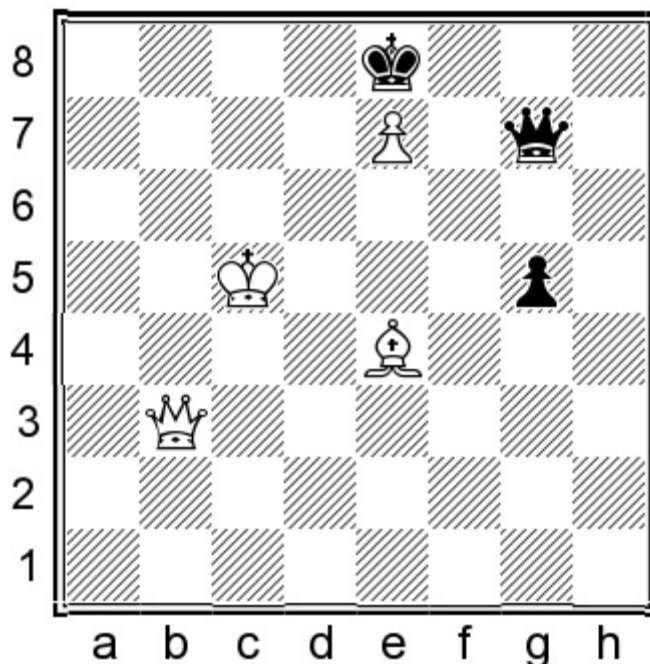
9.♗e5 ♖d8 10.♗c6

The move repetition means that White was able to solve his problems and secure the draw.

½-½

Example 9

Study by A. Zhukov, 2005



Unexpected moves are sometimes the only way to get over a barrier that exists in a position. In this particular position there are only a few pieces left on the board, and in addition White needs to act quickly since Black threatens to win the white pawn, after which it would be a dead draw. Queen and bishop alone cannot do any damage to the black king. The truth is that the king is exposed at the moment, but there are no concrete threats after checks 1. ♕b8 or 1. ♖c6 since they do not lead to mate.

The biggest obstacle to finding the unexpected moves is thinking too much about material! You have learned the value of the pieces and you know that the loss of a piece and sometimes even a pawn can lead you to defeat. Your brain takes this information very seriously, but don't allow this to restrain your vision and ideas while you are thinking about possible moves! In this position, freeing the brain from concerns about material is precisely what will decide the issue. White sacrifices his most valuable piece, the queen, without even getting a pawn for it!

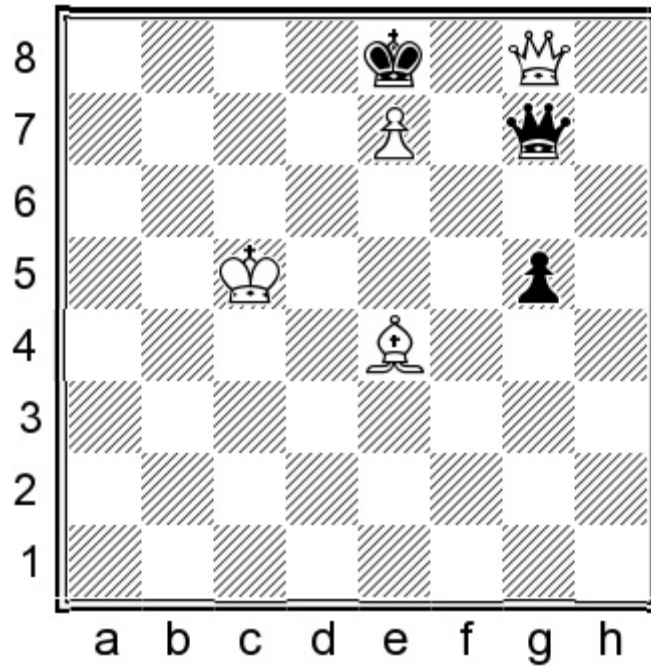
1. ♕g8+!!

A) As I mentioned, the cooperation of the duo (the queen and the bishop) through checks does not lead to mate. 1. ♖c6+ ♔xe7 2. ♕e3+ ♔f7 3. ♖d5+ ♔g6 4. ♕e6+ ♖f6 5. ♖e4+ ♔g7 6. ♕d7+ ♖f7

B) Or 1. ♕b8+ ♔xe7 2. ♕d6+ ♔f7 3. ♖d5+ ♔e8.

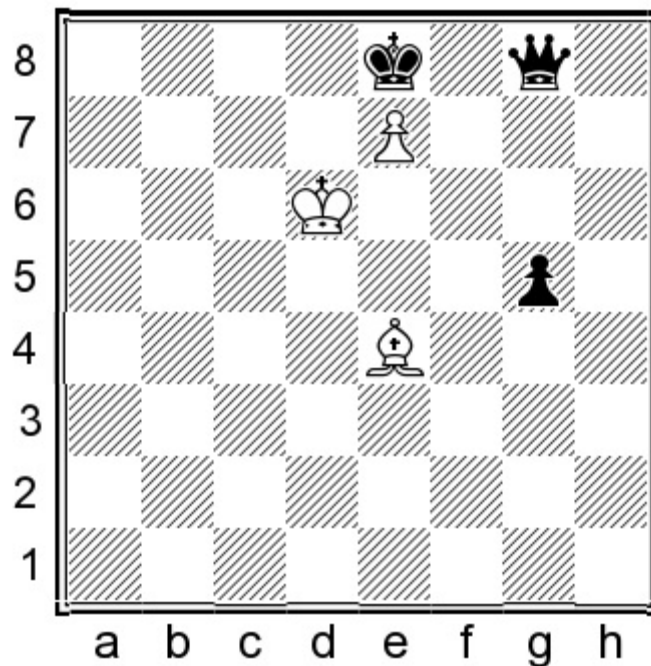
C) And the problem is that on 1. ♔d6 Black captures the pawn with check: 1... ♕xe7+. But this move is actually the problem that you are required to solve in this position. If the black queen could not take the pawn after 1. ♔d6 or give check White would win!

1. ♕g8+!!



Position after: 1. ♔g8+!!

1... ♕xg8 2. ♖d6!



Position after: 2. ♖d6!

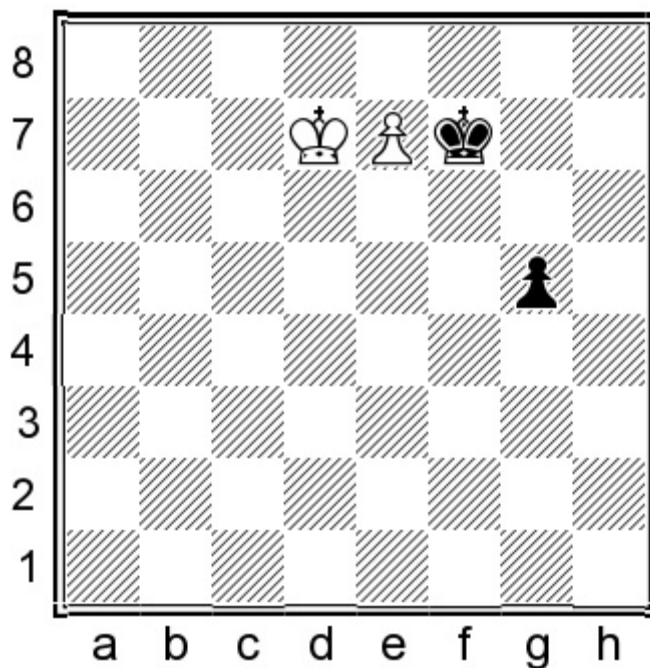
Suddenly Black has no defense! The point is that the black queen cannot kick the white king away with check. That is why it is very important that the black g-pawn is alive and actually Black loses because of his own pawn since it blocks a possible check on g3!

Black has no time for

2...g4

because White is in time to tame the g-pawn.

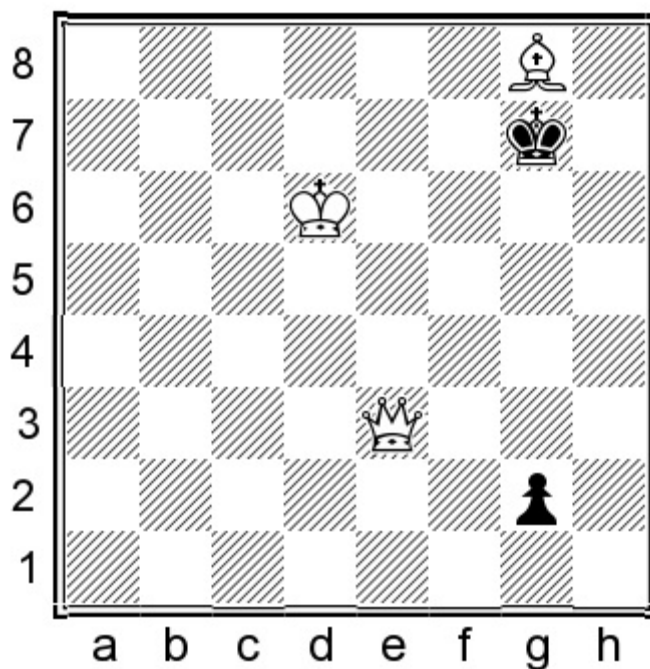
A) Black is helpless in other cases as well. 2...♔b3 3.♙g6+ ♚f7 4.♙xf7+ ♔xf7 5.♙d7



Position after: 5. ♙d7

B) Or 2...♚g7 3.♙c6+ ♔f7 4.e8=♚+.

3.♙c6+ ♔f7 4.♙d5+ ♔g7 5.♙xg8 g3 6.e8=♚ g2 7.♚e3



Position after: 7. ♔e3

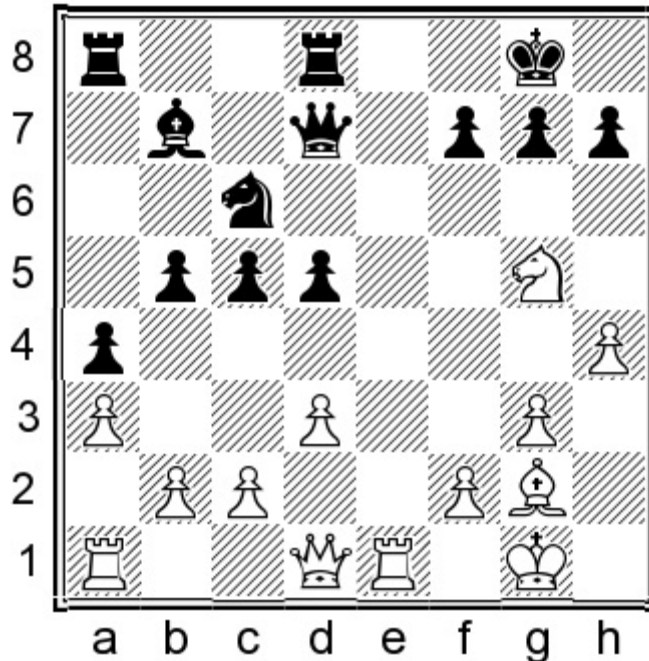
White wins.

1-0

Example 10

From Adly – Cordes

Tegernsee 2017



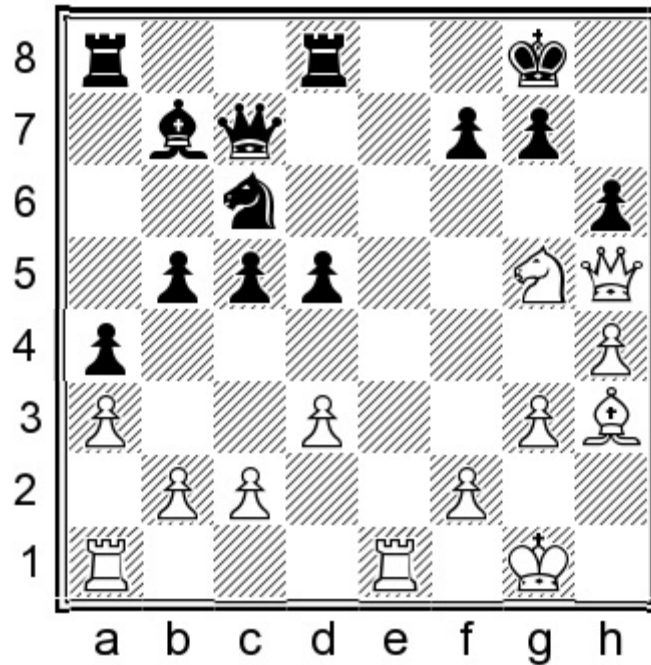
When you develop an eye for unexpected moves, you will be able to execute combinations such as the following one.

Material on the board is equal, but the white pieces are much better placed. The knight on g5 attacks the f7- and h7-squares and the white queen is ready to join the attack. The rook on e1 controls the e-file while the bishop attacks the d5-pawn and will be very well supported by the knight if it comes to h3. The black pieces are defensive, placed only on the queenside, and the king is very poorly defended. Lots of factors that say it's time to attack!

20. ♔h5 ♔f5

Black was counting on this defense and now wants to play ... ♔g6 and offer the exchange of queens, which would significantly reduce the pressure.

20...h6 loses due to 21. ♔h3! ♔c7

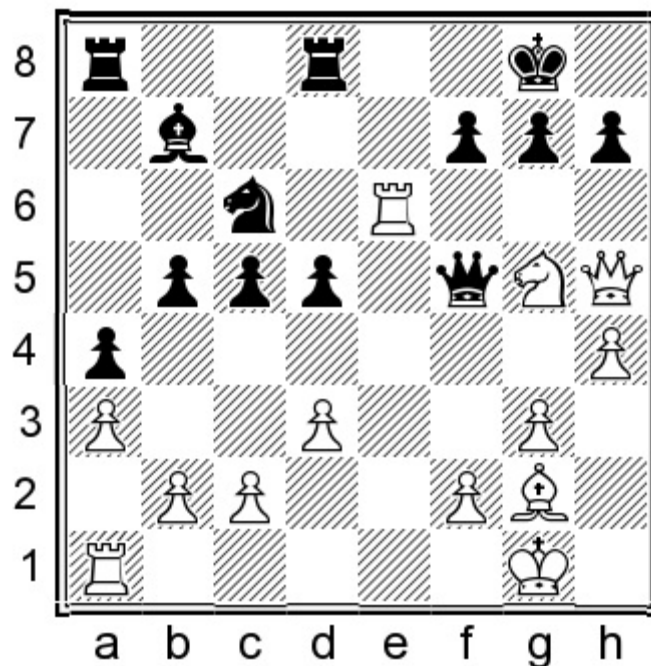


Position after: 21... ♔c7

22. ♘xf7! ♕xf7 23. ♗e6 The pin wins the queen.

How can White stop this ... ♗g6 resource? The first step is to turn off the materialism drive and since something big is on the menu (a mating attack) it's time to be ready for sacrifices too! When you think that way, you will come up with a move that prevents ... ♗g6.

21. ♗e6!!



Position after: 21. ♗e6!!

21...fxe6

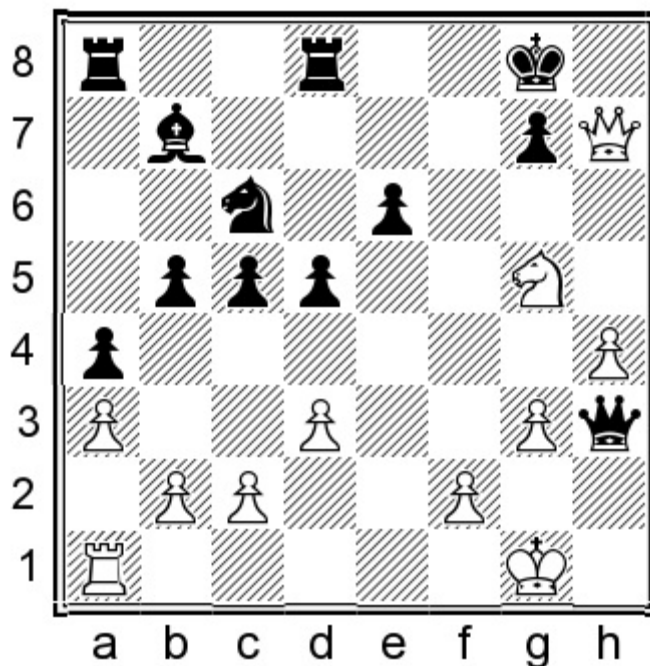
Black has no time for 21...h6 because of 22.♔h3! and the black queen falls

22.♔h3!

Suddenly Black's position completely collapses.

22...♙g6

22...♙xh3 23.♙xh7+

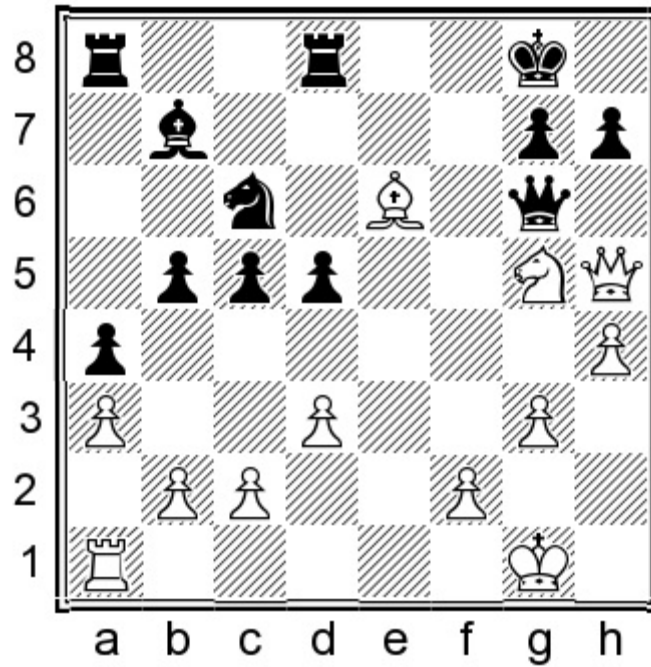


Position after: 23. ♙xh7+

White, of course, could have taken the queen immediately, but why not to pick some black pawns first?

23...♔f8 24.♙h8+ ♔e7 25.♙xg7+ ♔d6 26.♘xh3

23.♔xe6+

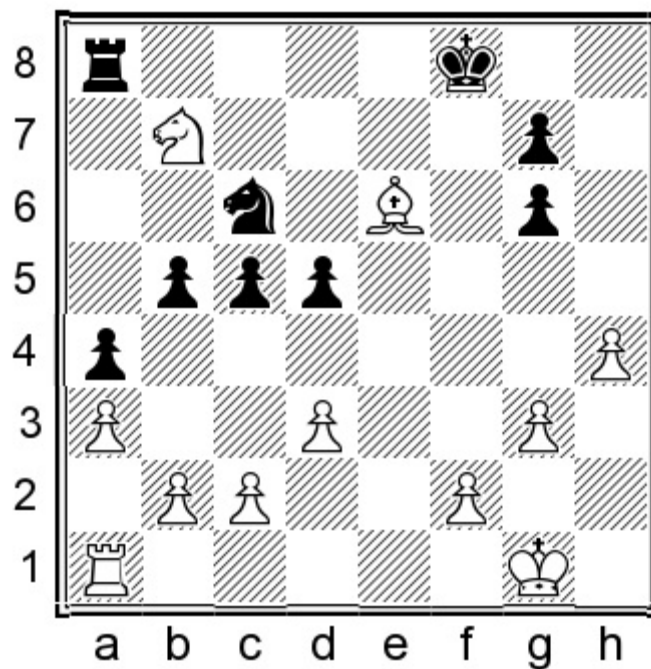


Position after: 23. ♖xe6+

23... ♖h8

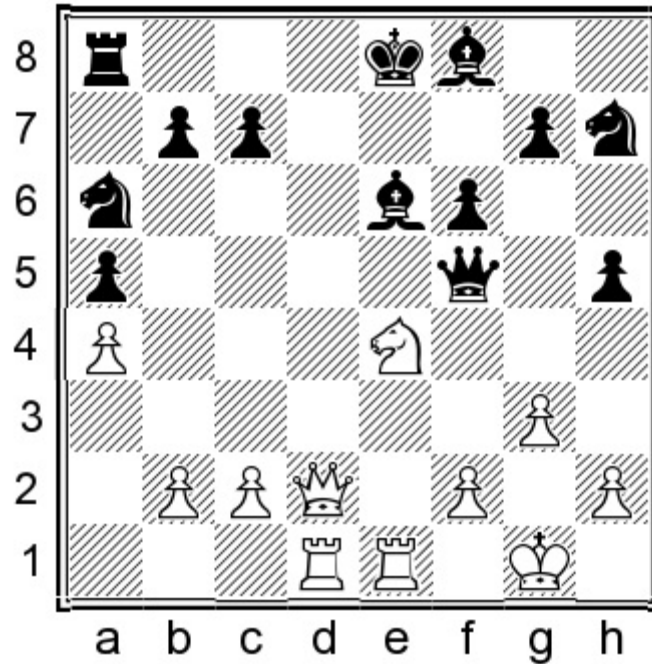
23... ♖f8 24. ♗xh7+ ♖e7 25. ♛xg6

24. ♗f7+ ♖g8 25. ♗xd8+ ♖f8 26. ♛xg6 hxg6 27. ♗xb7



Position after: 27. ♗xb7

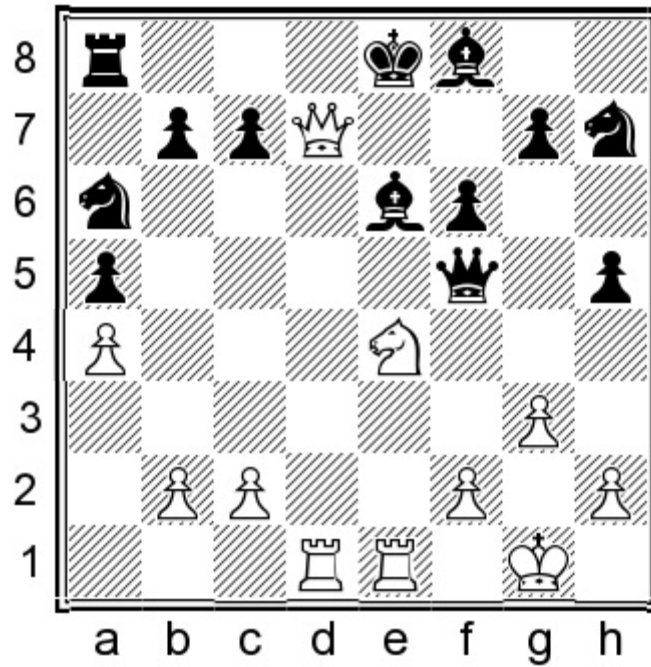
Example 11
White to move wins



Unexpected moves are generally associated with moves beyond the logical thinking that we all learn when starting to play chess. Material through the value of the pieces is something that is quickly learned and somehow the brain creates resistance against moves that depart from those value-principles. However, if you calculate the moves by creating the candidate moves list with my method, you will be ready to rise above the materialistic limits! When you start counting candidate moves on the list, I'm sure you will consider the winning move in this position, which is

1. ♔d7+!!

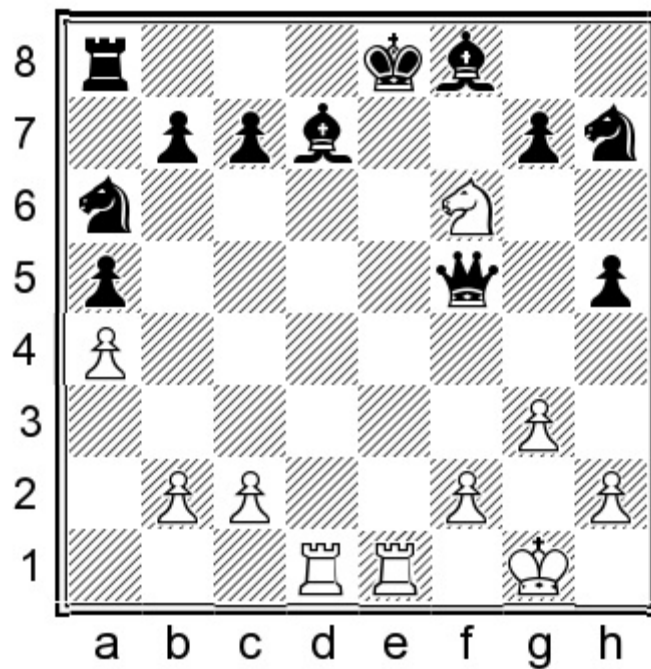
Why is this move, unlike other checks, a serious move for the candidate list? Because after Black takes the queen more checks appear, which is a very appealing prospect.



Position after: 1. ♔d7+!!

1... ♕xd7 2. ♞d6+

2. ♞xf6+



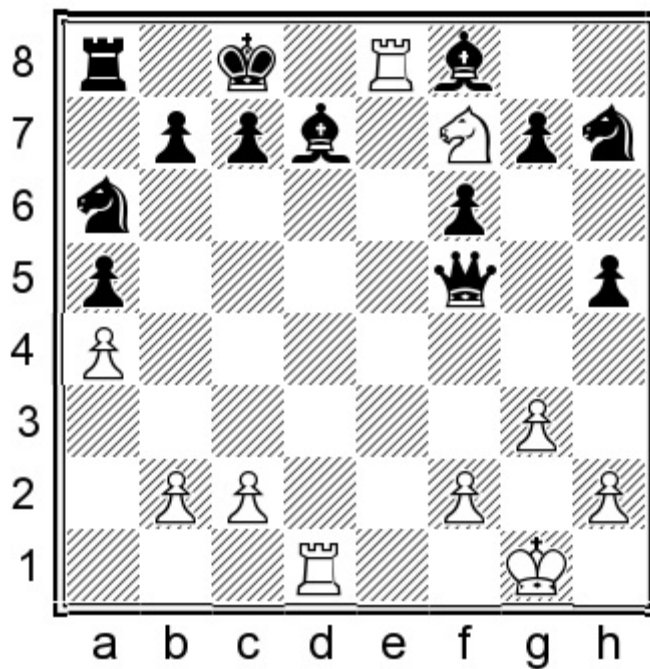
Position after: 2. ♞xf6+

This would lead to mate after 2... ♔d8?? [But Black wins by running to the other side. 2... ♔f7! Then you can come to the conclusion that helps you to find the right path: the black king must not escape to f7.] 3. ♖xd7+ ♔c8 4. ♖e8#

2...♔d8 3.♘f7+! ♔c8

It looks like the combination is not working since Black is running away, but now White has another unexpected ace up his sleeve!

4.♖e8+!!



Position after: 4.♖e8+!!

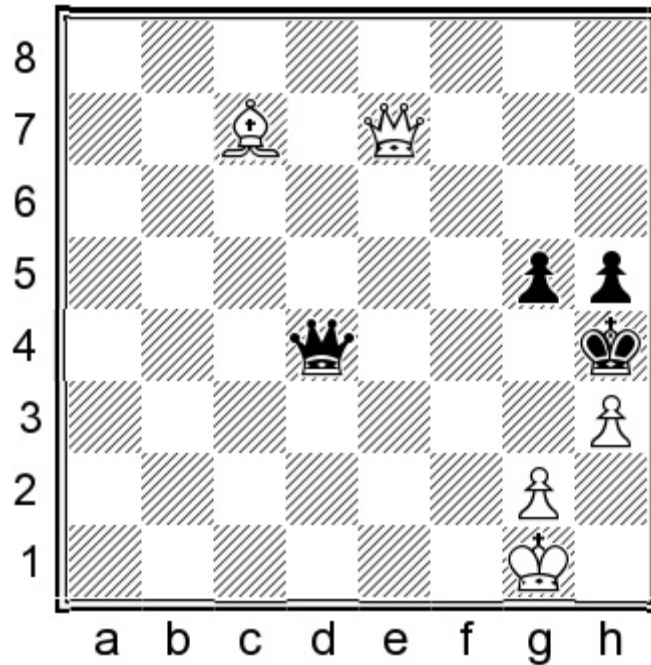
4...♗xe8 5.♖d8#

White delivers a mate with his only two remaining pieces on the board, while Black has a bunch of material!

Unexpected Move – Material 1:0!

1-0

Example 12
White to move wins



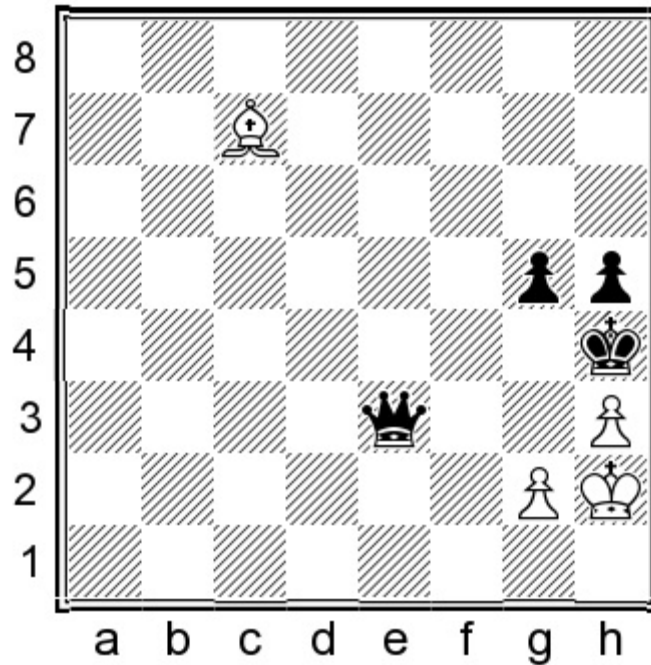
An even more difficult solution can be found in this example. White seems to be winning because of the piece up, but don't forget that for the weaker side sometimes the way out of a hopeless situation is stalemate! If there were no black queen on the board, it would be a stalemate and White needs to avoid that somehow. But how?

1. ♖e3!!

White sacrifices a full queen only to stop stalemate! The black g-pawn is not pinned anymore.

If White moves the king, a simple queen sacrifice follows: 1. ♔h2 ♕g1+ 2. ♔xg1 stalemate.

1. ♕e3!! ♕xe3+ 2. ♔h2



Position after: 2. ♔h2

Now White is threatening to give mate with a pawn check on g3. Black must try to stop that.

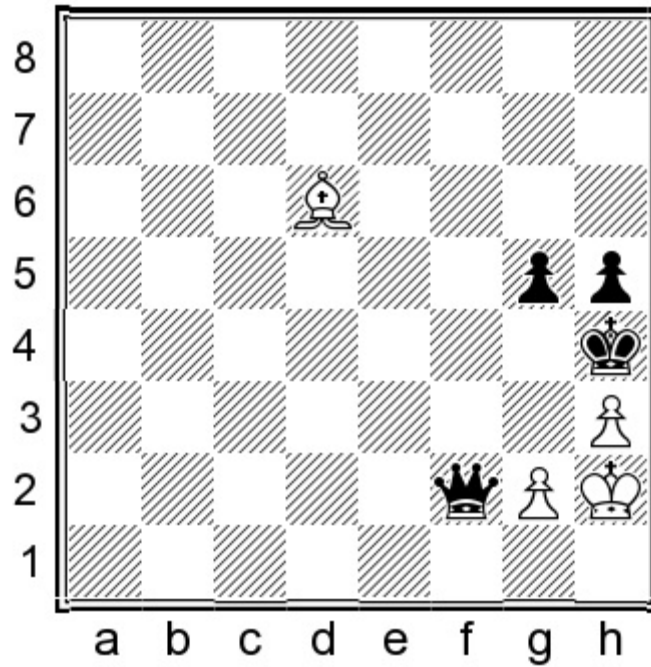
2... ♖f2

A) It does not help to play 2...g4 because of 3. ♘d8+.

B) Or 2... ♖f4+ 3.g3+ ♖xg3+ 4. ♘xg3#.

A mate by the pawn to g3 has been prevented, but what's important in chess and what we grandmasters tend to do more than "ordinary mortals" is to ask ourselves: what would my opponent play if it were his move? The answer here is that there is no good move!

3. ♘d6!!



Position after: 3. ♖d6!!

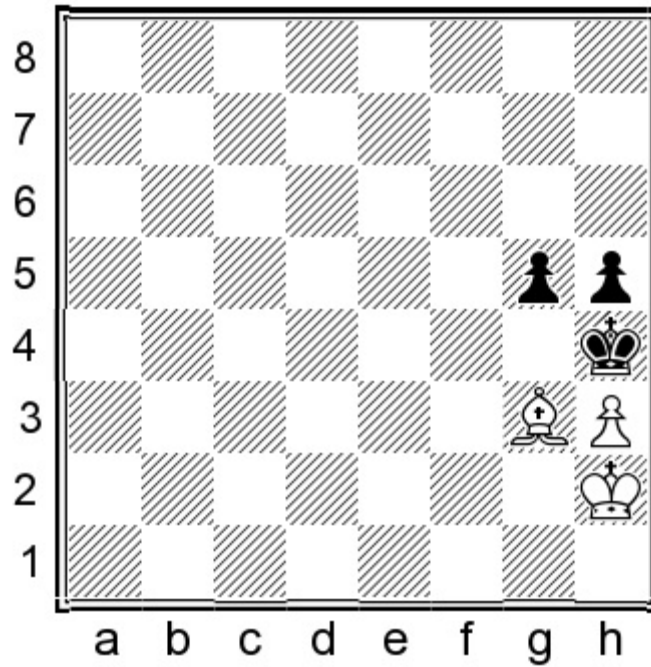
The black queen cannot keep White's g-pawn pinned along the second rank and at the same time prevent the bishop from giving mate on g3. Black is lost!

3... ♖f4+

A) 3... g4 4. ♖e7+

B) 3... ♖e2 4. ♖g3#

4. g3+ ♖xg3+ 5. ♖xg3#

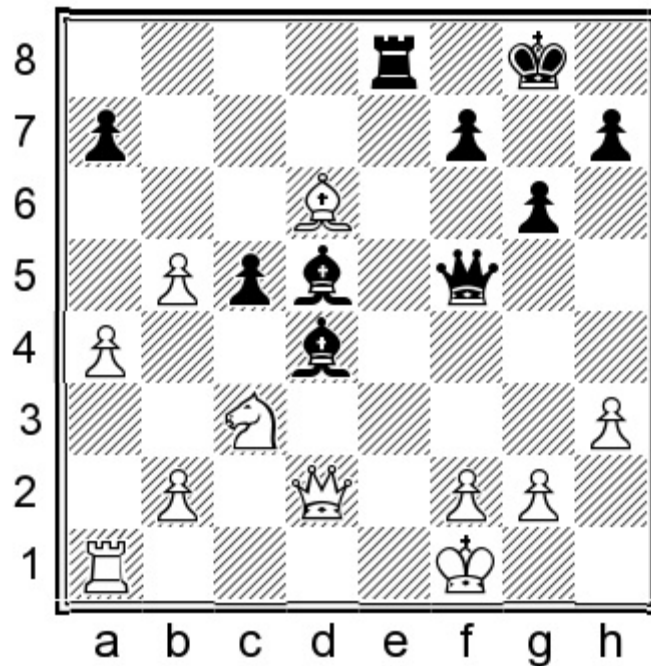


Position after: 5. ♔xg3#

1-0

Example 13

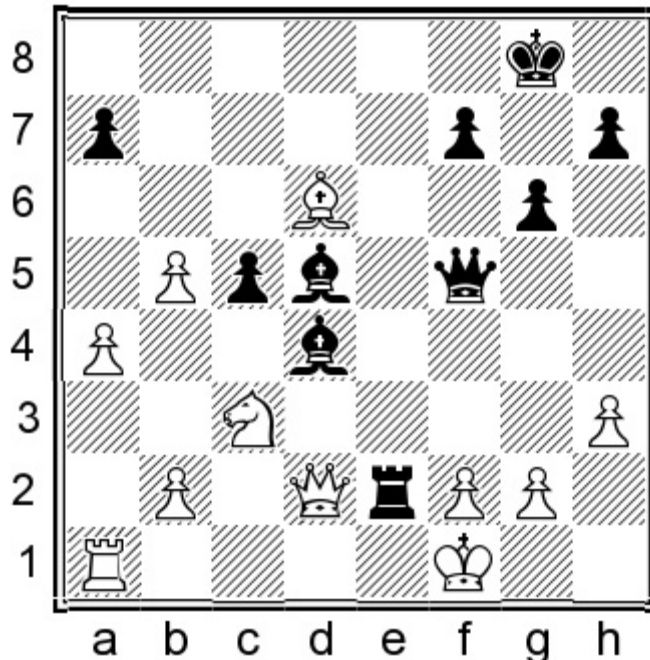
From Raja – Melkumyan
Bangkok 2018



Even the world's top grandmasters are not immune to missing unexpected moves. In this position, Armenian national team player Melkumyan failed to spot a killer move.

25...♔e3?

He had missed the murderous 25...♖e2!!

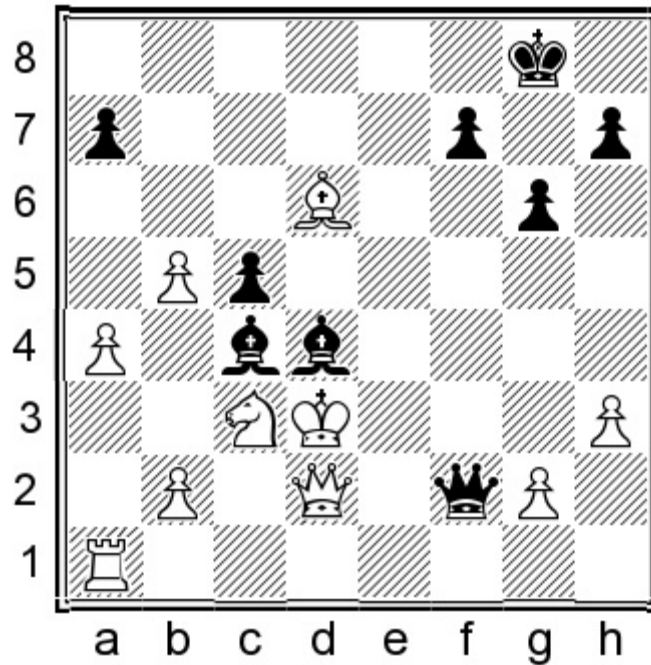


Position after: 25...♖e2!!

But how do you find that move? The white queen is overloaded by defending the second rank; if it could be removed it would be mate on f2. It is important that you notice that type of feature in a position! Yet it's not easy to drag the queen away. If the white queen is obliged to defend the f2-square, ...♖e2 is the only move which interrupts that communication immediately, and what should encourage you is that capturing with the knight is immediately mate. With good calculation you can see that capture by the king is bad as well. Therefore, only taking with the queen remains, which is the mental barrier that prevents you from finding the ...♖e2 move since you have to see the next unexpected move too!

A) 26.♘xe2 ♕xf2#

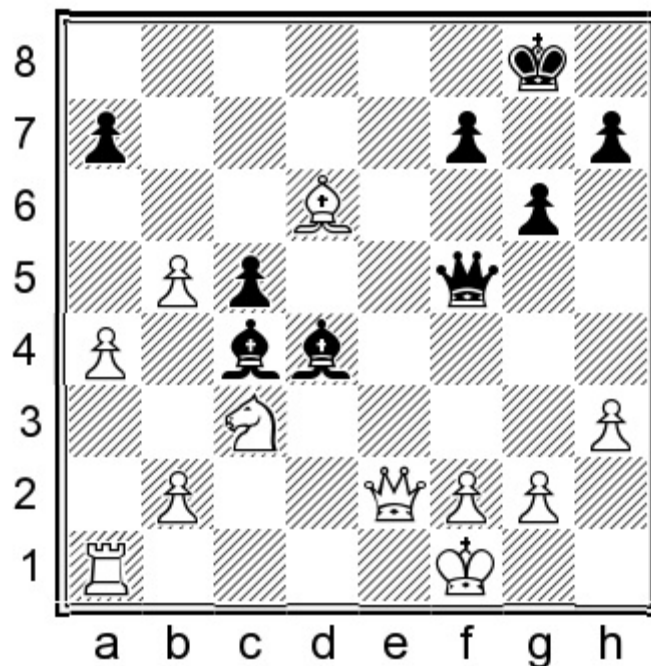
B) 26.♔xe2 ♕xf2+ 27.♔d3 I suppose the reason Melkumyan gave up on the ...♖e2 idea is this position. He probably had missed that now the white king is a new overloaded piece that must defend its queen, so now that's the piece which must be dragged away! [27.♔d1 ♕b3+ 28.♔c1 ♕e3 and the queen falls] 27...♕c4+!!



Position after: 27...♙c4+!!

28.♙c2 ♙b3+! 29.♙d3 [29.♙c1 ♙e3 is the same as after 27.♙d1 ♙b3] 29...c4+! 30.♙e4 ♛xd2 And the queen is lost.

C) 26.♛xe2 ♙c4!



Position after: 26...♙c4!

This motif with the bishop sacrifice on c4 to distract the white queen was seen by Melkumyan because he played on this motif later in the game. 27.♛xc4 And after the white queen is dragged

away, there follows 27...♙xf2# mate.

25...♘e3? 26.♙e1!

Later Black managed to save the draw, mainly because of excessive respect by his opponent.

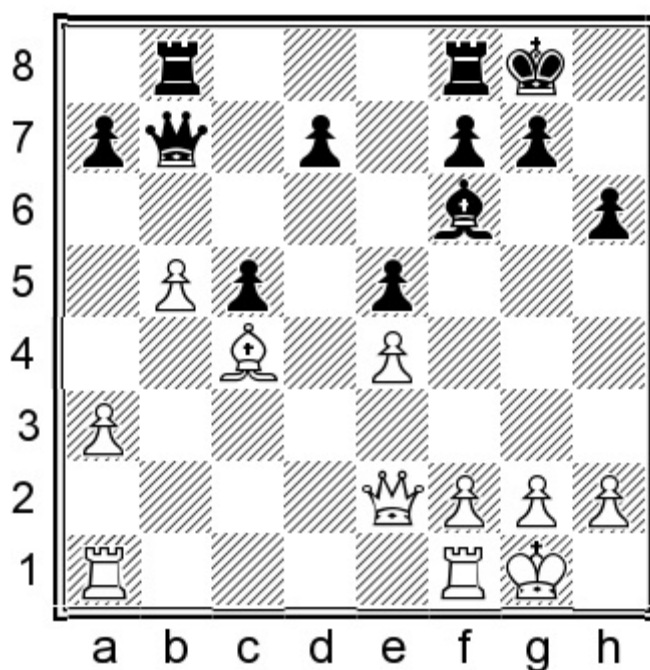
26.♙e2 ♘c4! is the motif I've mentioned! 27.♙xc4 ♙xf2#

1/2-1/2

Example 14

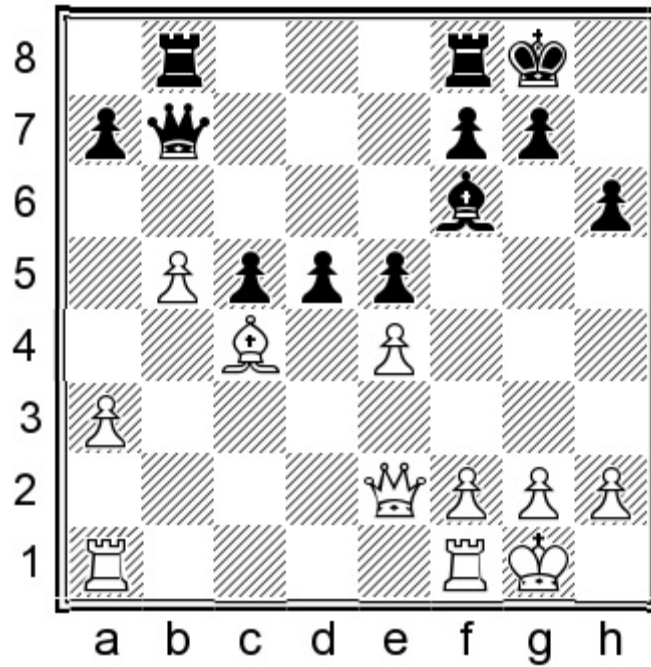
From Dreev – Bacallao Alonso

Havana 2018



An unexpected move does not have to be only an attacking one. It can also be defensive, like this one. White is a pawn down, but in positions with opposite-colored bishops and heavy pieces (rooks and queens) on the board the most important thing is not to count the pawns, it is much more important to see who has the initiative. This is obvious here: the white bishop is active while the black one is very passive and does not attack anything. Also, White is ready to double rooks along the d-file and Black seems to have a long passive defense ahead of him. But Bacallao's unexpected move completely changes the situation on the board!

24...d5!!

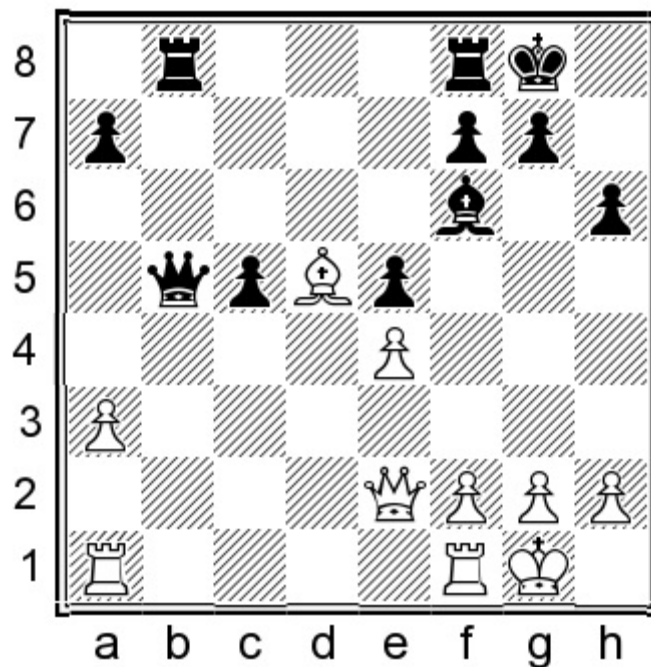


Position after: 24...d5!!

A great pawn sacrifice to activate the bishop! Like I said, the activity of a bishop with heavy pieces on the board is the key!

25.exd5

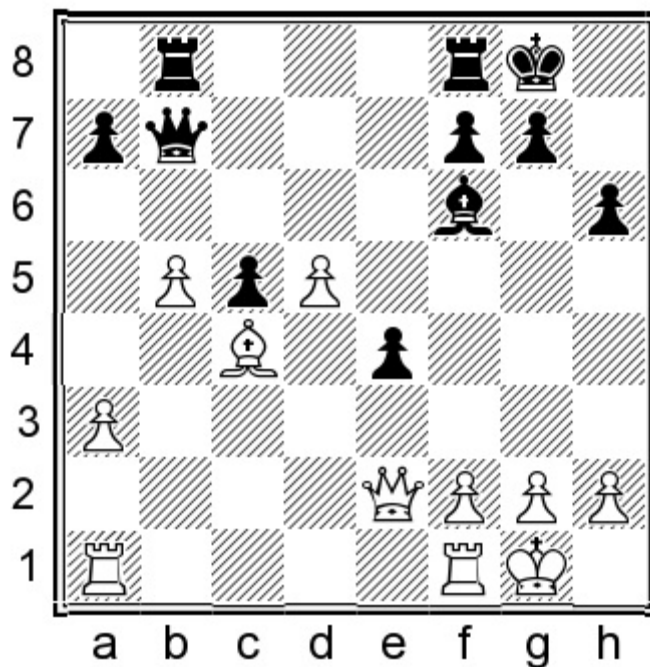
25. ♖xd5 ♔xb5



Position after: 25...♔xb5

It is true that the black bishop is still passive, but Black has achieved a lot in terms of the pawn structure since he exchanged his passive d7-pawn for White's active one on b5, which, in cooperation with the a-pawn, threatened to one day become a dangerous passed pawn. Also, Black has now opened the b-file for his rook.

25...e4!



Position after: 25...e4!

The bishop has freed itself!

26.♖a1

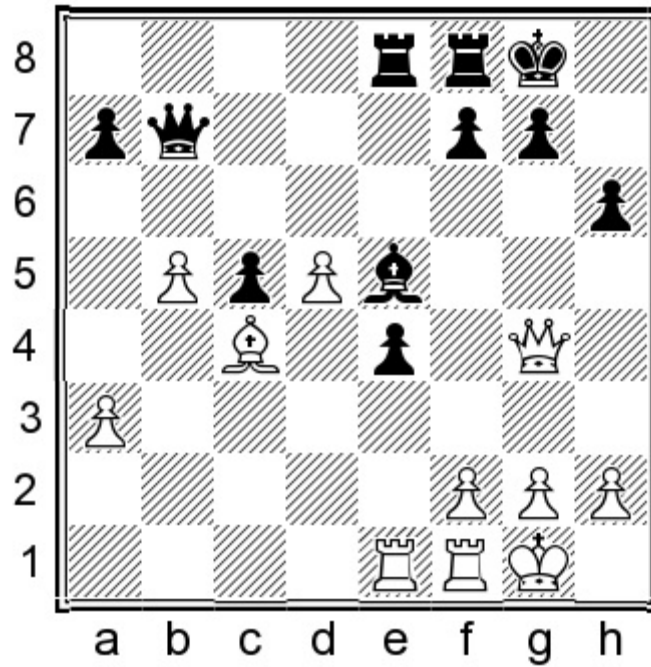
Of course not 26.♙xe4 because of 26...♗xa1.

26...♖b8!

It is said that a strong player is one who knows how to place his rooks. Here in fact the rook on b8 was passive while the rook on f8 will be important later.

27.♙g4 ♗e5

Black threatens to support the e4-pawn with ...f5 and in the meantime the pawn on e4 is indirectly defended.



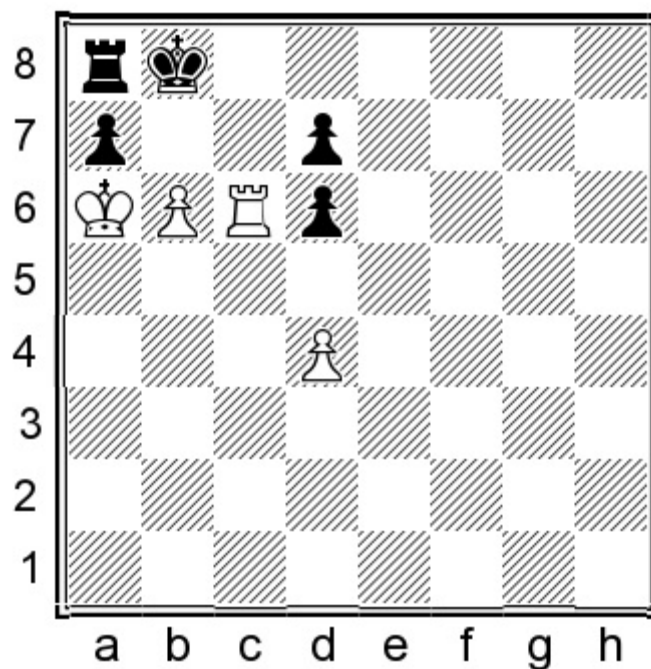
Position after: 27...♔e5

The game soon ended in a draw, which means that Black with his unexpected move had successfully solved his problems.

1/2-1/2

Example 15

Study by A. Selezniev, 1935

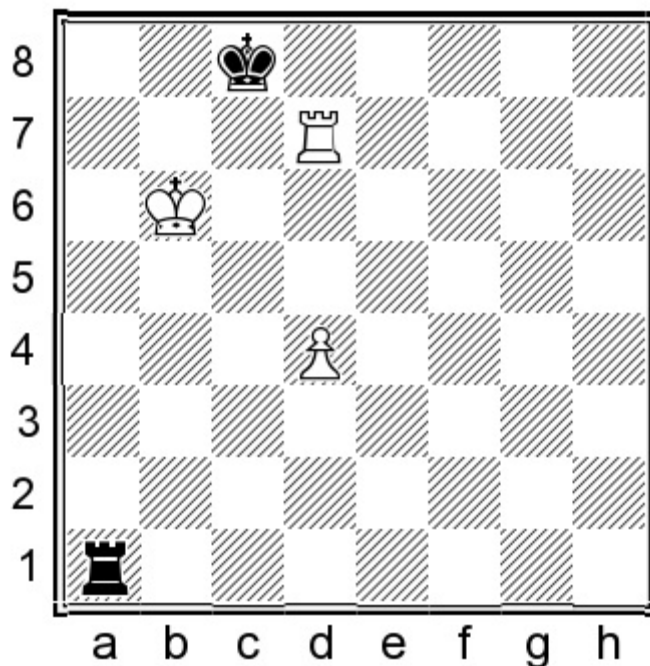


When you develop a feeling for unexpected moves you will be ready to solve various studies and chess

problems, such as this one.

1.♖c8+!!

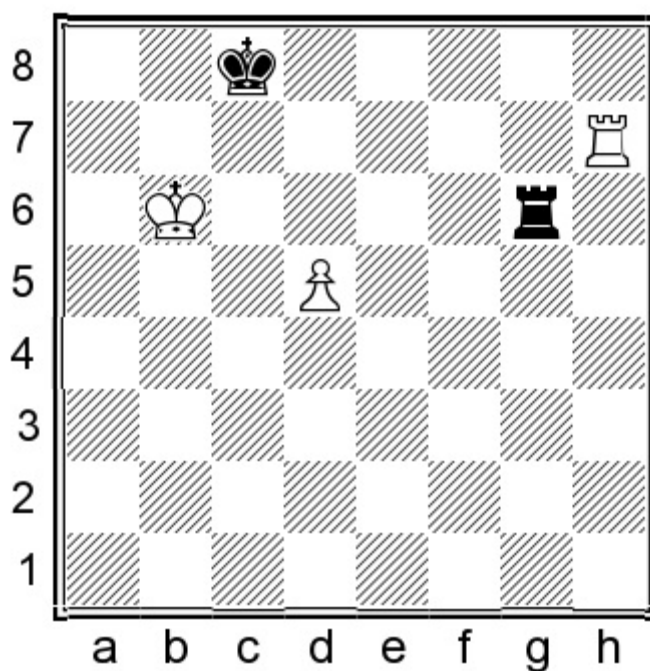
A) The logical 1.♖xd6 leads after 1...axb6+ 2.♔xb6 ♖a1 3.♖xd7 ♔c8



Position after: 3...♔c8

to a draw since one pawn up (with a few exceptions) is not usually enough to win rook endgames.

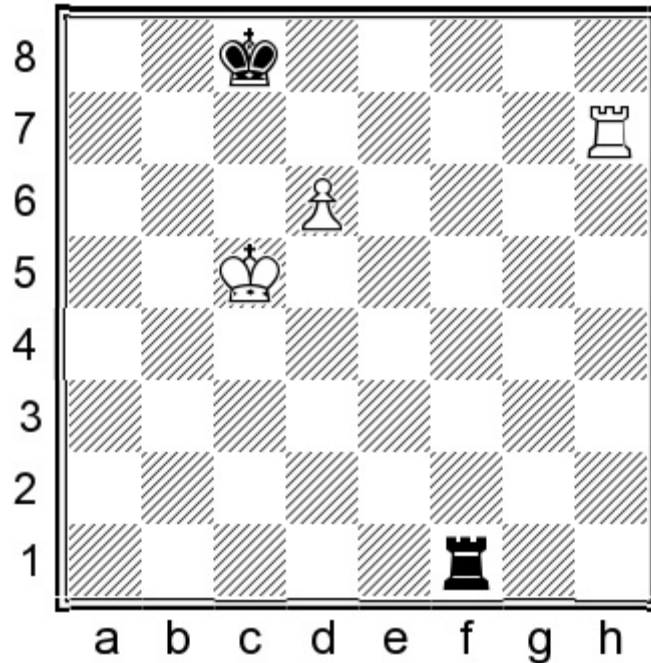
4.♖h7 ♖g1 5.d5 ♖g6+!



Position after: 5... ♖g6+!

A basic rule in rook endgames is called the sixth-rank rule (the Philidor position). But do not let it confuse you, this also works on the fifth rank as well if we move all the pieces one rank down. But a useful tip when you are the stronger side (a pawn up) is that you can put your rook on the sixth rank first, because your opponent may be confused if he only heard about the rule without knowing it!

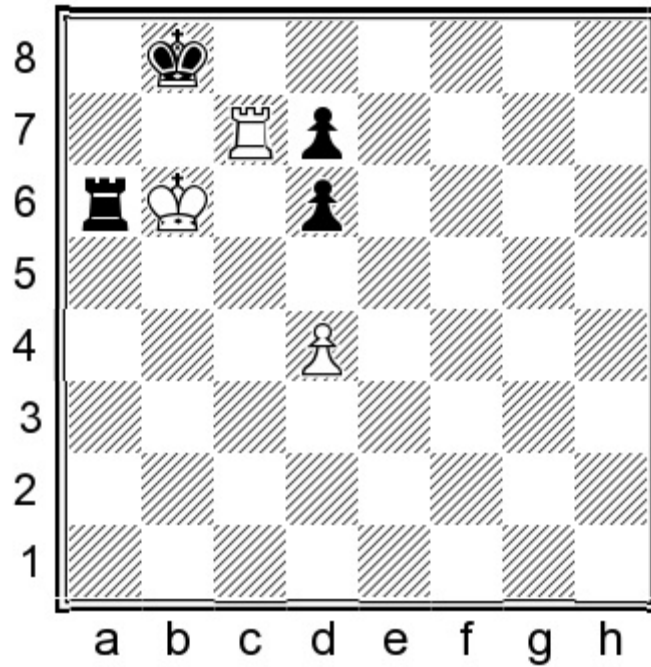
6. ♔c5 ♖f6! The rook waits on the sixth rank until the white pawn arrives there, after which the rook goes to the first rank and checks the white king from behind, since the king is suddenly left without a shield. 7.d6 ♖f1



Position after: 7... ♖f1

8. ♔c6 ♖c1+ 9. ♔d5 ♖d1+ 10. ♔e6 ♖e1+ 11. ♔f6 ♖f1+ And since White cannot improve his position, the game is drawn.

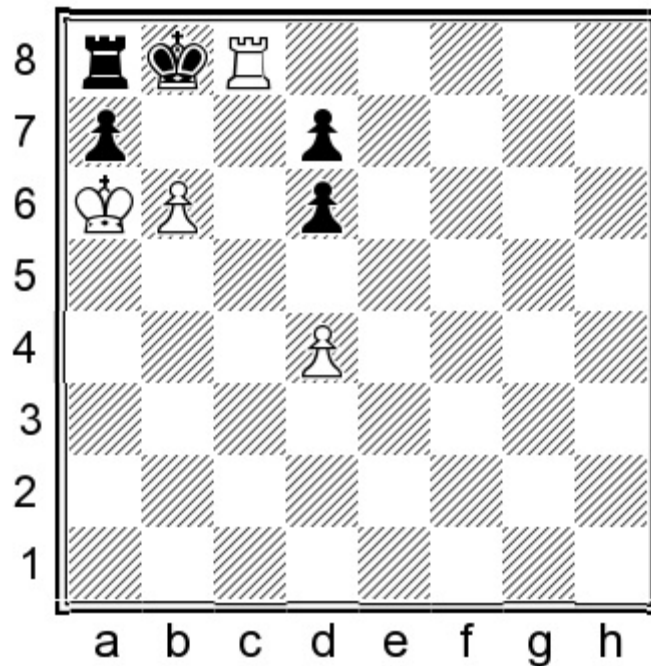
B) White does not achieve anything with 1. ♖c7 axb6+ 2. ♔xb6 either due to 2... ♖a6+!



Position after: 2...♖a6+!

3.♔xa6 ♕xc7 and the resulting pawn endgame is a draw. 4.d5 ♔d8 5.♔b7 ♕e7 6.♔c7 ♕e8! It is important to wait and step into the opposition. 7.♔xd6 ♕d8 8.♔c5 ♕c7 9.d6+ ♔b7 The draw is clear.

1.♖c8+!!



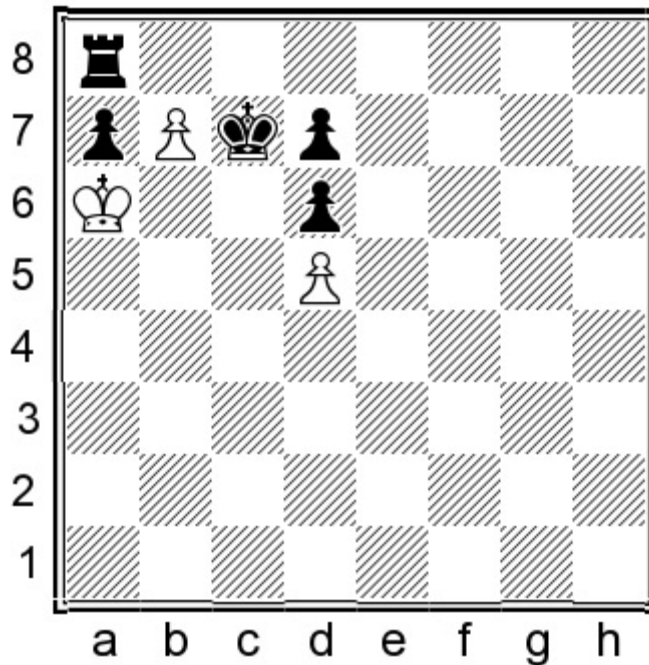
Position after: 1.♖c8+!!

1...♕xc8 2.b7+ ♔b8

Of course not 2...♔c7 because of 3.bxa8=♚.

It seems that Black does not have a problem because again there will be a pawn endgame where he even has an extra a-pawn, but again the important question is: what would Black play if it were his move? He would have to play with the d6-pawn because his king cannot move! Therefore, White should prevent Black from moving his d6-pawn.

3.d5! ♔c7



Position after: 3...♔c7

4.bxa8=♙!!

Another unexpected move. Black is playing for stalemate, and here pawn promotion to a queen or rook would lead to just that.

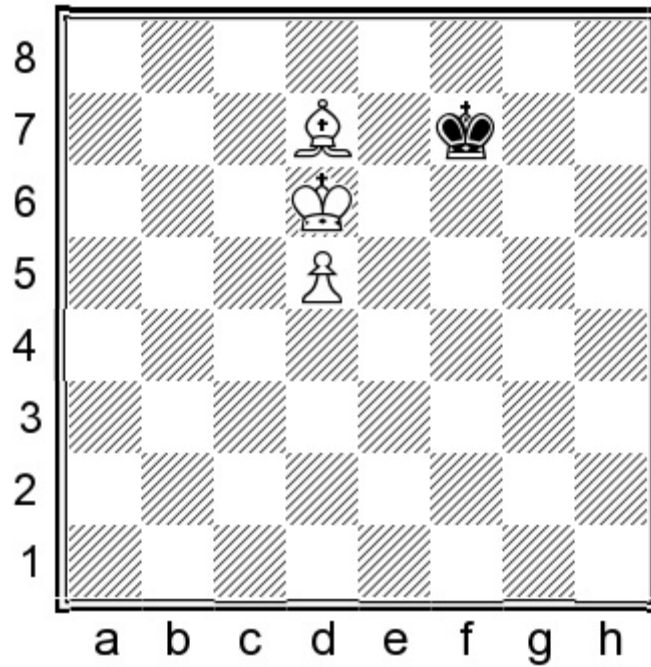
If White promotes the pawn to a knight than it can't get out: 4.bxa8=♞+ ♔b8 5.♞c7 ♔xc7 6.♔xa7 and you have already seen this position before.

The only solution is therefore a bishop promotion!

4...♔b8

There are no more stalemates and now black pawns are starting to fall.

5.♙b7 ♔c7 6.♔xa7 ♔d8 7.♔b8 ♔e8 8.♔c7 ♔e7 9.♙c8 ♔f6 10.♔xd6 ♔f7 11.♙xd7



Position after: 11. ♖xd7

White wins.

1-0

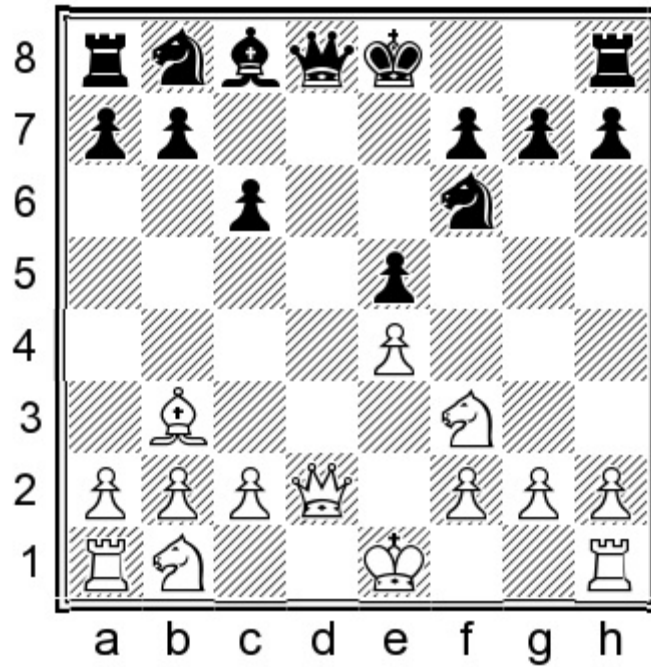
Example 16

Analysis from Hendriks – Kerigan

Hoogeveen 2013

Perhaps the most unexpected move I've ever seen comes from a normal opening. See for yourself.

1.e4 e5 2.♖c4 ♘f6 3.d3 c6 4.♘f3 d5 5.♖b3 ♖b4+ 6.♖d2 ♖xd2+ 7.♙xd2 dxe4 8.dxe4



Position after: 8.dxe4

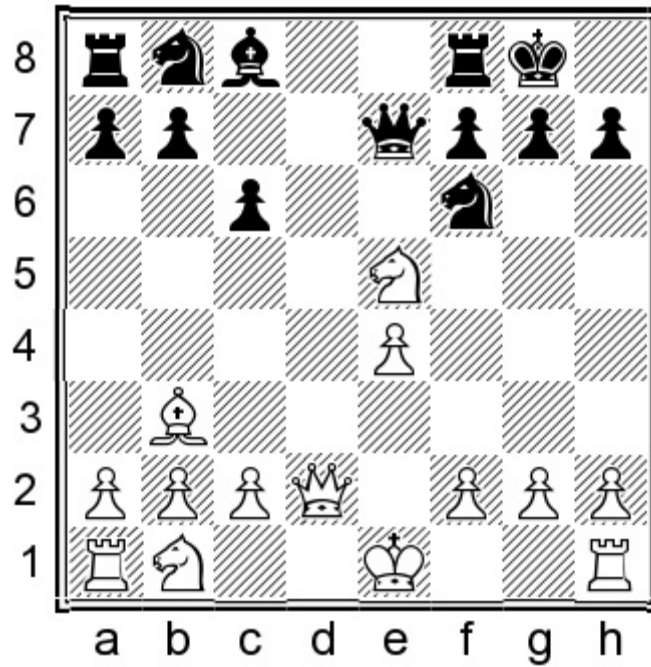
8...0-0

A) 8...♔xd2+ 9.♘bxd2 and the white knight defends the e4-pawn.

B) And White has a good position after 8...♘xe4 9.♔xd8+ ♕xd8 10.♘xe5.

9.♘xe5 ♔e7

This position is what Black had in mind when castling and now it seems that the initiative is in his hands.



Position after: 9...♙e7

10. ♙f4

Especially after this move because now after

10... ♘h5

it seems that White is losing the knight because in case of

11. ♙xf7+

Black plays

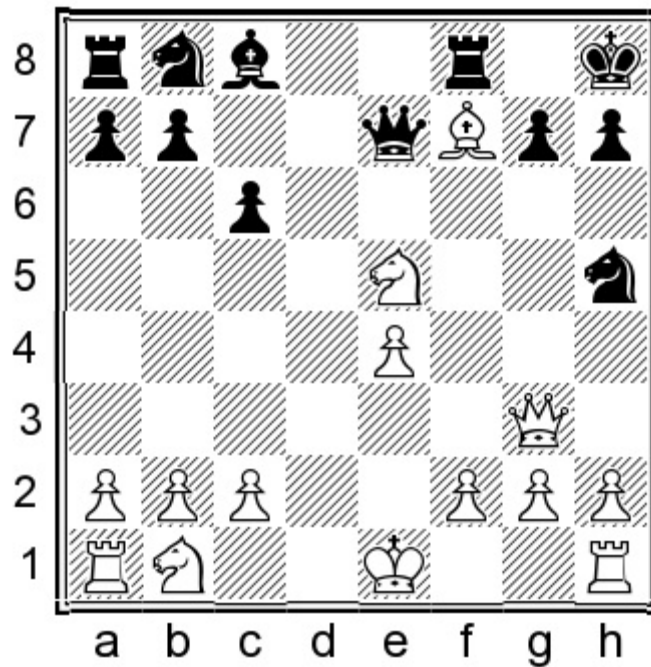
11... ♚h8



Position after: 11... ♔h8

and the queen must abandon the defense of its knight. But is that 100 percent correct? No, White has a completely unexpected ace up his sleeve.

12. ♕g3!!



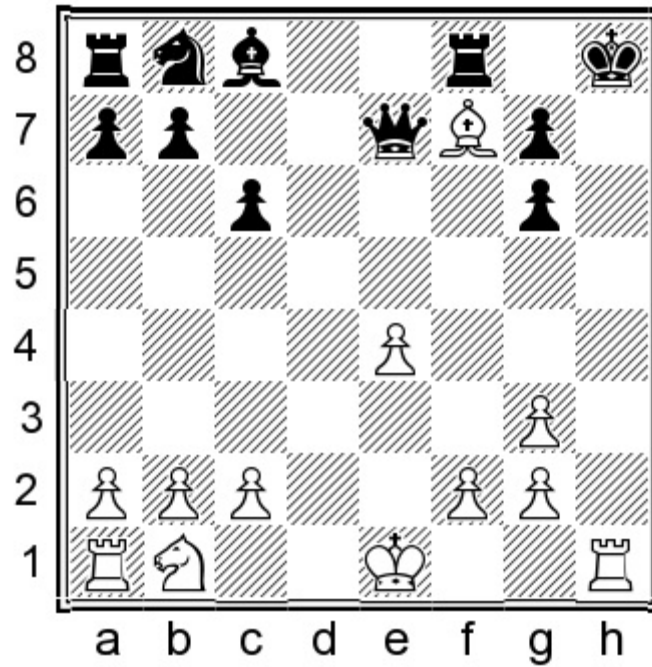
Position after: 12. ♕g3!!

And White actually comes out with a slightly better position!

12...♖xg3

12...♖xf7 13.♘xf7+ [White can even have fun with another unexpected move, 13.♙g5!?] 13...♙xf7
14.♙d6 White is slightly better.

13.♘g6+! hxg6 14.hxg3+!



Position after: 14.hxg3+!

The point!

1-0

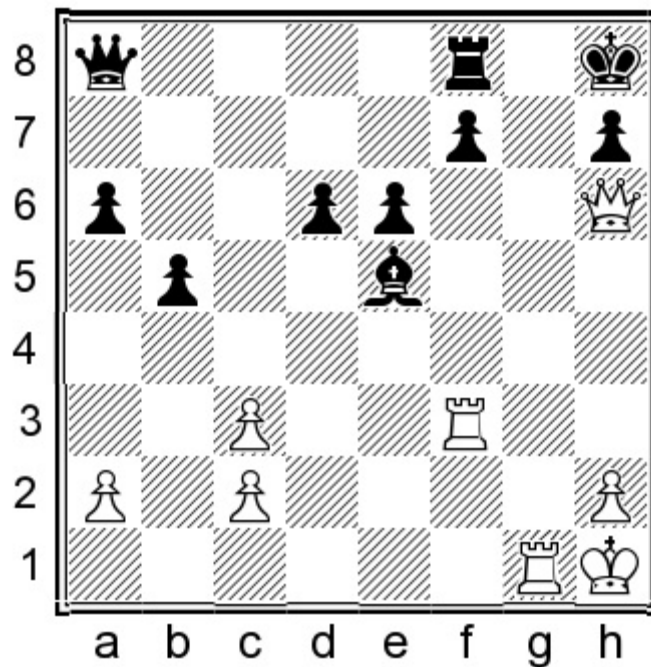
Chapter 8

Power of the rooks

Example 1

From Soultanbeieff – Borodin

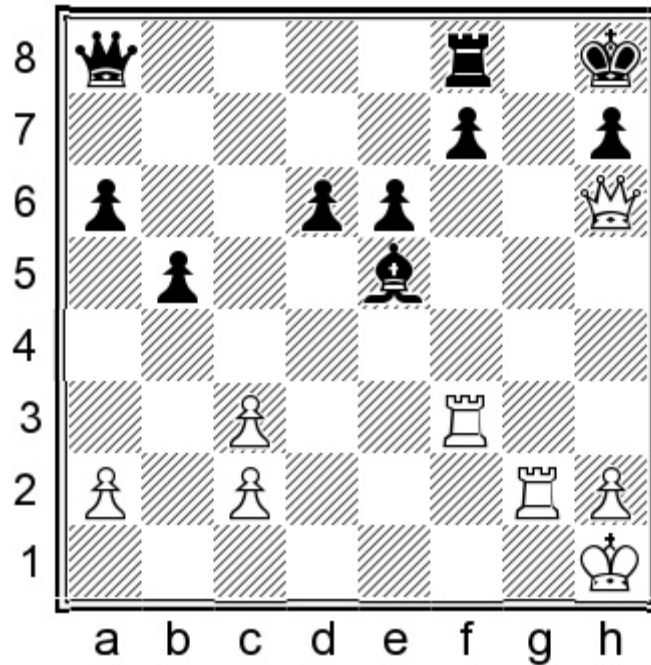
Brussels 1943



Rooks are extremely powerful pieces if they can operate along open files. When they are attacking together they can create mate threats, as you will see in the following examples.

In the position above, Black is relying on diagonal pinning to prevent White from sacrificing the queen on h7, which would be followed by mate with ♖h3. Yet chess games are not so simple; in most cases there are other factors. In this position, that factor is the rook on f8 which is under attack from the white queen (unprotected) and you will see how White exploits this!

26. ♖g2!!

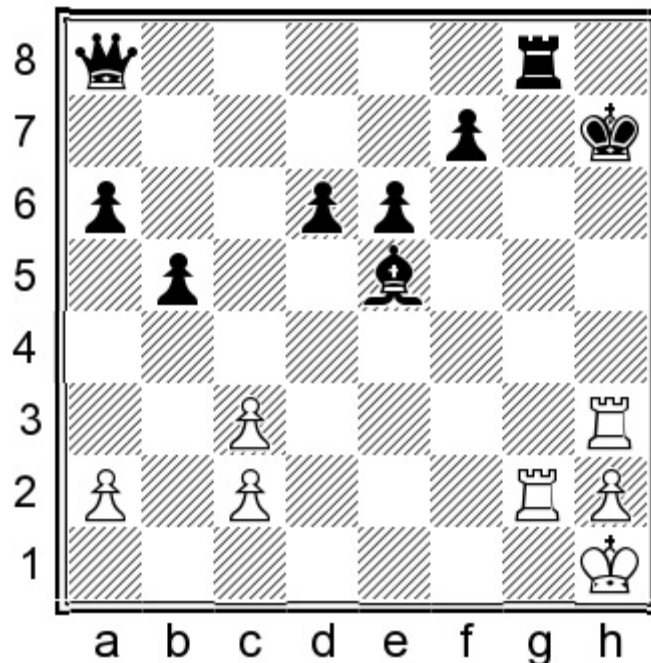


Position after: 26. ♖g2!!

A move that crushes Black!

Now White is threatening the mating sacrifice with queen to h7 and Black's ...♙xf3 capture is no longer check. So the black queen is an overloaded defender, which must stay on the a8-square and defend the rook on f8.

26...♜g8 27.♚xh7+ ♔xh7 28.♜h3#



Position after: 28. ♜h3#

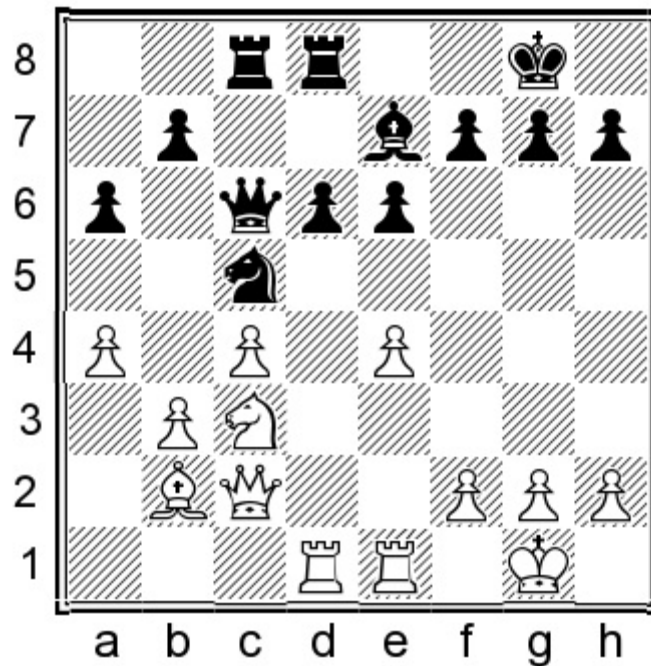
A perfect finale by the white rooks!

1-0

Example 2

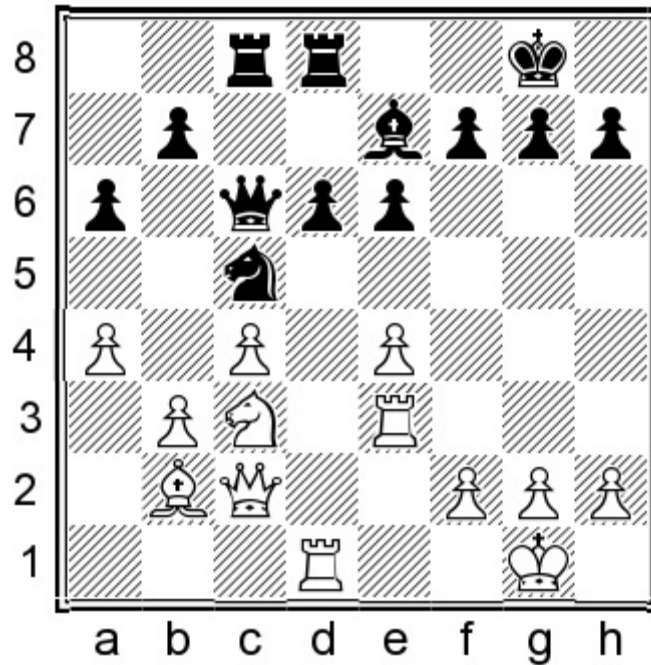
From Tkachiev – Watson

London 1993



When a player feels the power of the rooks he can come up with an idea that his opponent will not notice in time, as is the case in this game:

19.♖e3



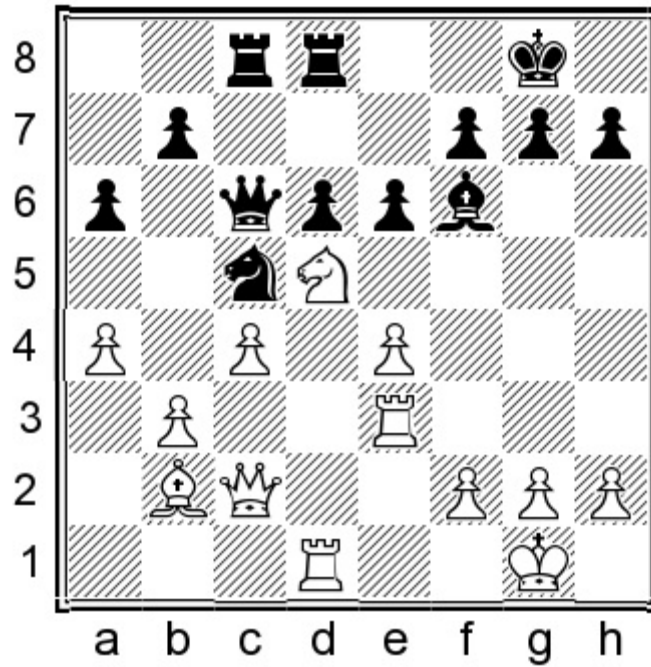
Position after: 19. ♖e3

A so-called “rook lift”, by which a rook is transferred via the third rank to attack the opponent’s king. What makes it special is that the rooks operate mostly behind their pawns as support, whereas with a rook lift the rook comes in front of its pawns. It seems unnatural, but it can certainly be dangerous for an opponent’s king.

19... ♗f6?

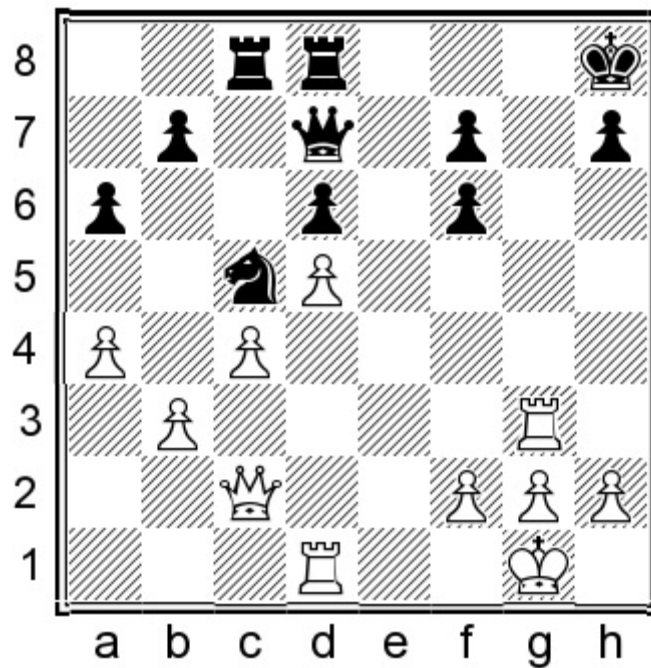
The losing mistake; Black has not felt the danger! Now grandmaster Tkachiev, at that time an up and coming star, performs a fantastic sequence of forced moves.

20. ♘d5!!



Position after: 20. ♖d5!!

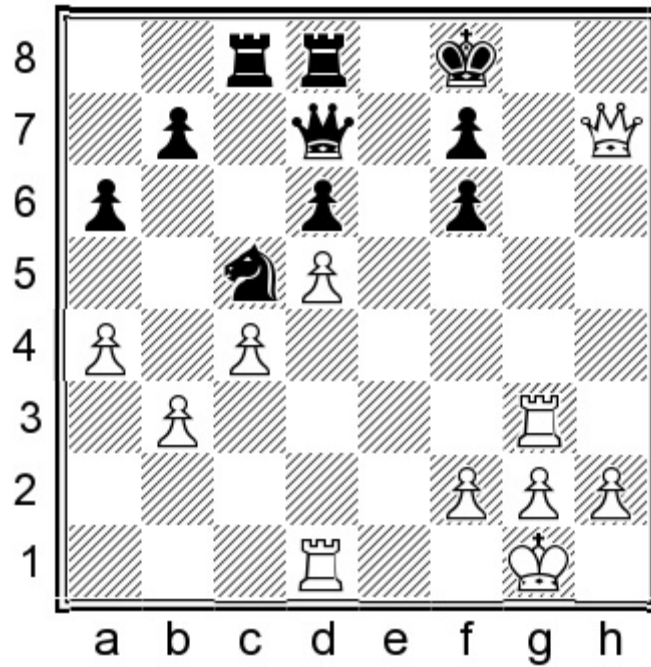
20...exd5 21.exd5 ♔d7 22.♙xf6 gxf6 23.♞g3+! ♔h8



Position after: 23... ♔h8

The sacrifice seems to be wrong, but Tkachiev has seen further.

23...♔f8 24.♞xh7



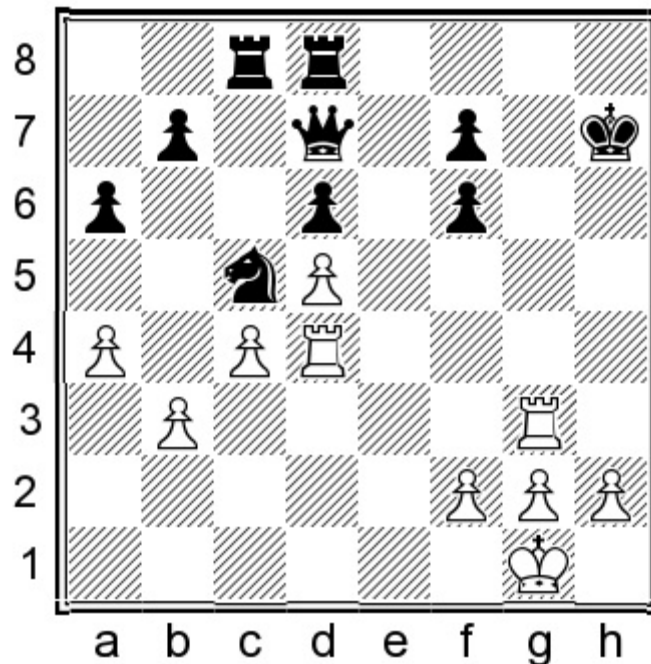
Position after: 24. ♖xh7

Now White is threatening to cut the retreat of the black king through the e-file and it will be mate.

24... ♖e8 Therefore Black prepares an escape via the d8-square, but after 25. ♖g8+ ♔e7 26. ♖e1+ ♔d8 27. ♖xe8+ ♚xe8 28. ♖xe8+ ♔xe8 29. ♗g8+ ♔d7 30. ♗xf7+ ♔d8 31. ♗xf6+ ♔d7 32. h4 White wins easily.

The finish is brilliant.

24. ♗xh7+!! ♔xh7 25. ♖d4!



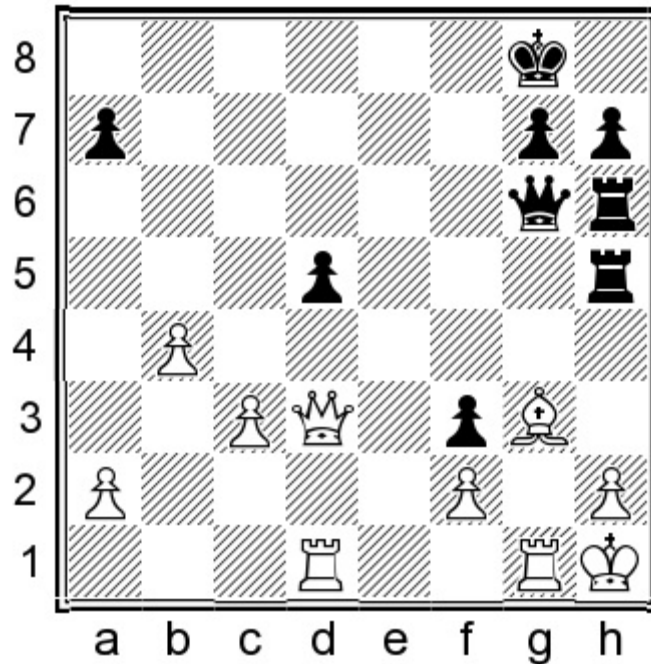
Position after: 25. ♖d4!

Black cannot stop mate along the h-file. The power of the rooks at work!

1-0

Example 3

Black to move wins



In this position, the black rooks threaten the white king and although he is a piece up, he has to think about how to save himself. The worst seems to have passed because White is ready to even sacrifice the lady on d5 just to remove one of his opponent's rooks and reduce the pressure. But Black doesn't allow that and follows with a queen sacrifice!

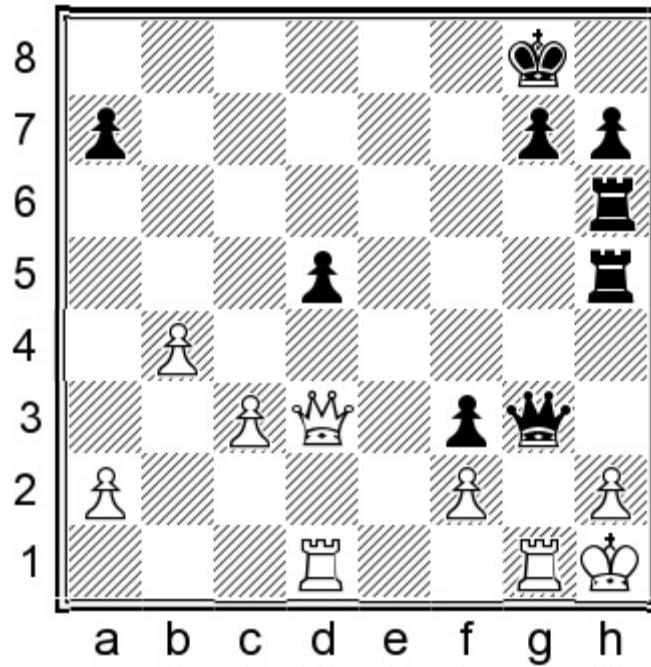
1... ♕xg3!!

Every capture should be considered!

1... ♕g4 2. ♕xd5+ ♖xd5 3. ♖xd5

1... ♕xg3!!

The queen is taboo because of mate, but White was counting on



Position after: 1... ♔xg3!!

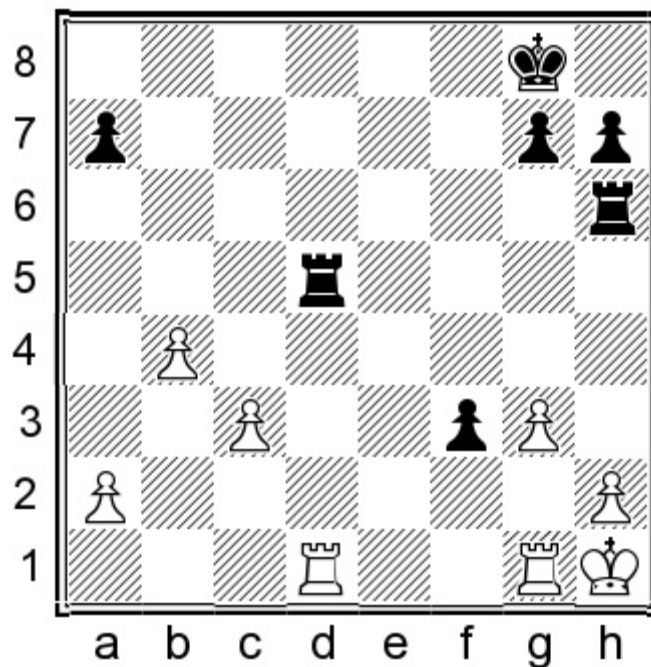
2. ♕xd5+

A) 2. fxg3 ♖xh2#

B) 2. ♖xg3 ♖xh2+ 3. ♔g1 ♖h1#

2... ♖xd5 3. fxg3

and it seems he has survived, but the black rooks show their power and now follows



Position after: 3.fxg3

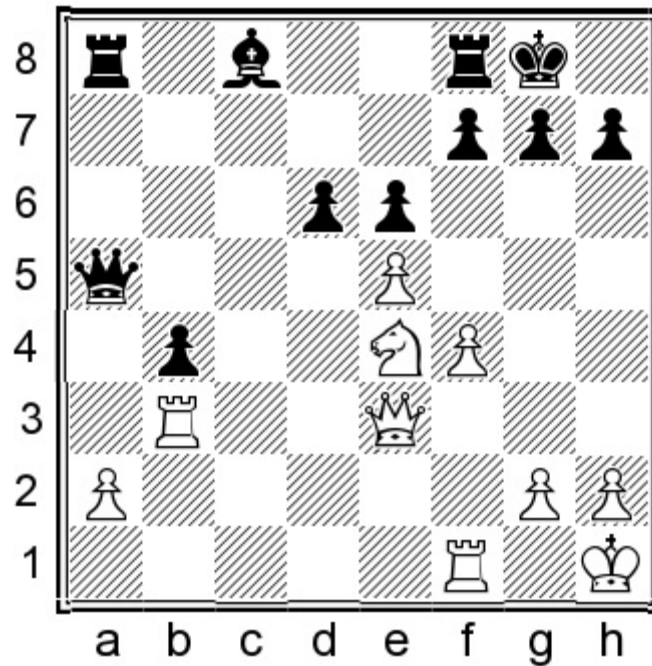
3...♖xh2+! 4.♔xh2 ♜h5#!

Mate!

0-1

Example 4

Analysis from Mira – Romanov
San Salvador 2015



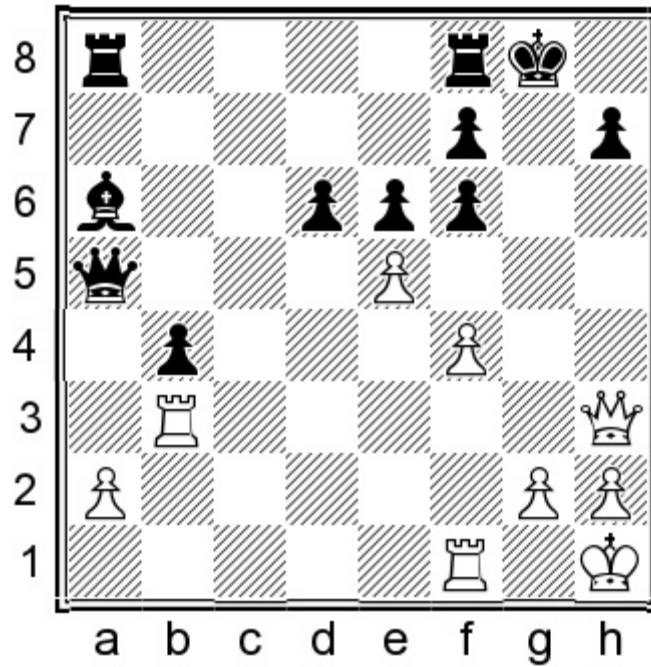
A similar idea was noticed by grandmaster Romanov, who almost made the move

23...♖a6

but spotted in time the following fantastic variation:

24.♘f6+! ♔h8

24...gxf6? 25.♕h3

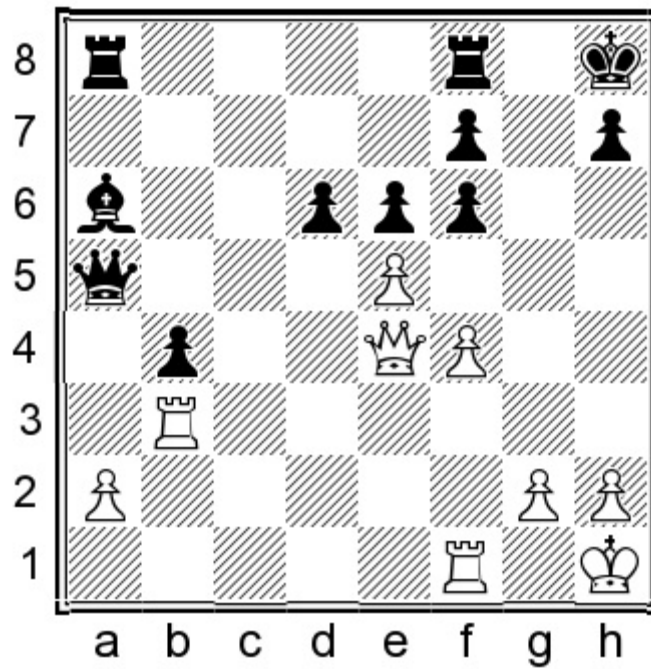


Position after: 25. ♔h3

White has a winning attack.

25... ♖h8 26. ♔h6 ♜g8 27. ♝h3 ♜g7 28. exf6

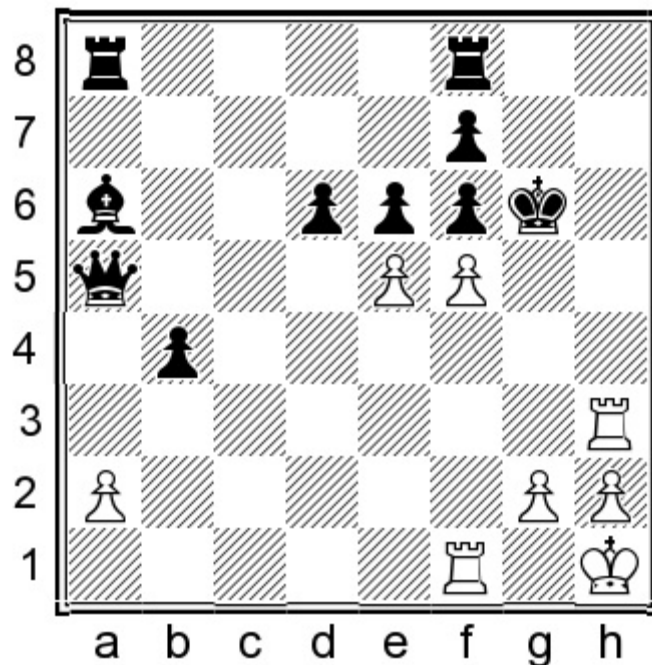
25. ♔e4 gxf6



Position after: 25...gxf6

It may seem that White's attack has come to an end but...

26. ♖xh7+!! ♔xh7 27. ♝h3+ ♕g6 28. f5+!

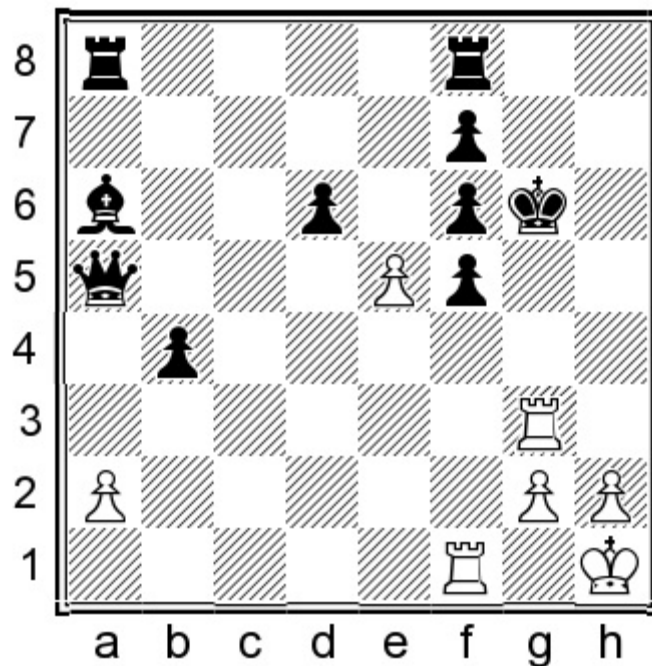


Position after: 28.f5+!

Preventing the king's escape to the center.

28...exf5 29. ♝g3+

White has a perpetual check.



Position after: 29. ♝g3+

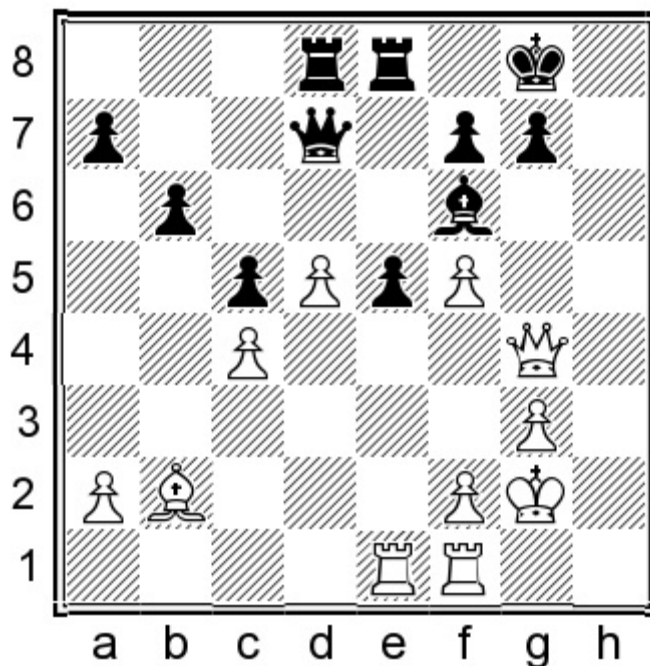
So instead of 23...♙a6 Romanov played 23...♙b7, controlling the e4-square, and won a good game.

0-1

Example 5

From Ikonnikov – Timmermans

Vlissingen 2017



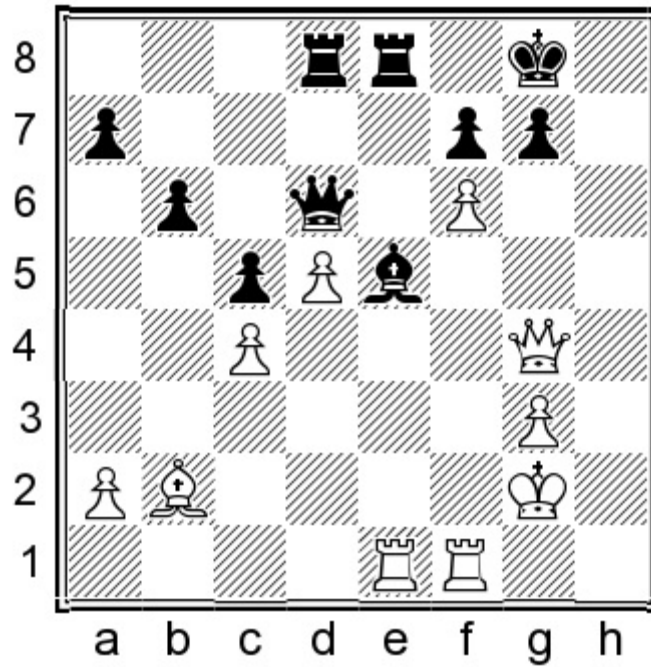
The rooks can also be dangerous when operating on a combination of files and ranks, as you will see in this example. The pinning factor is a very important thing here, as a motif that allows White to emphasize the power of his rooks!

33.f4! ♙d6

Black's queen defends the bishop and increases control over the e-pawn, but a fantastic combination follows.

33...exf4 34.♙xf6! Black loses a piece because of the pin.

34.fxex5 ♙xe5 35.f6!

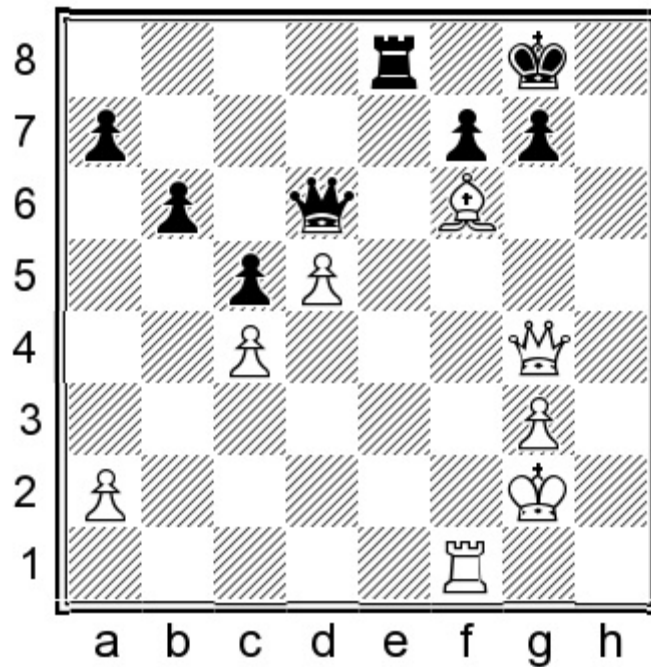


Position after: 35.f6!

An intermezzo move that prevents the black bishop from being secured with the ...f7-f6 move.

35...g6

35...♗xf6 36.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 37.♗xf6

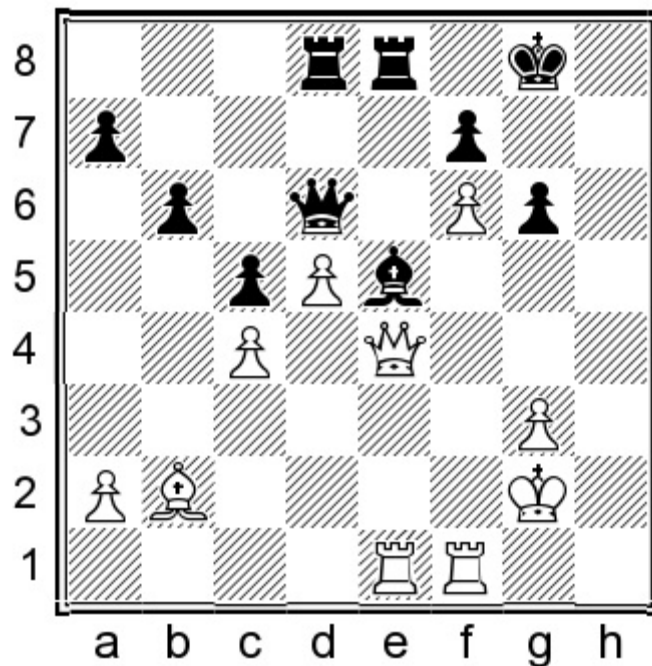


Position after: 37.♗xf6

and again the pin costs Black a piece.

How to employ the power of the rooks? The answer lies in an e-file sacrifice!

36. ♖e4!!

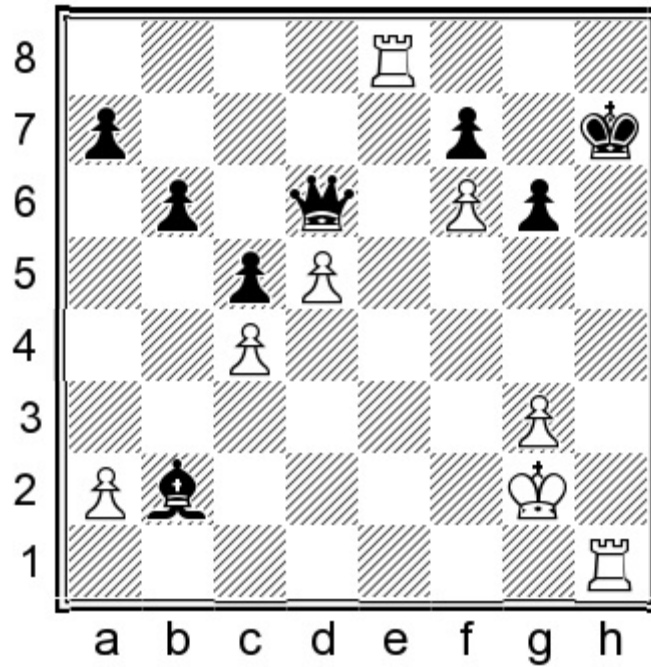


Position after: 36. ♖e4!!

36... ♟xb2 37. ♚xe8+ ♜xe8 38. ♜xe8+ ♔h7

All of a sudden the black king is caught in a mating net by the rooks after

39. ♜h1#!

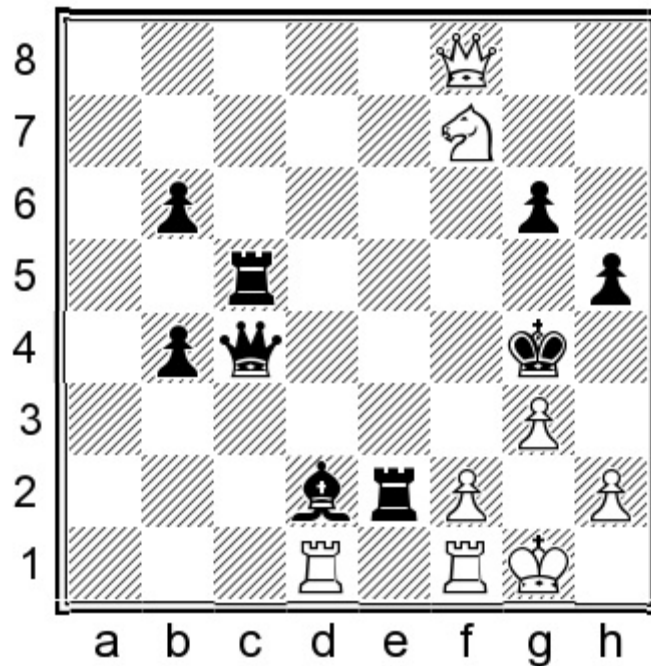


Position after: 39. ♖h1#!

1-0

Example 6

From Jelen – Larsen
Ljubljana 1977

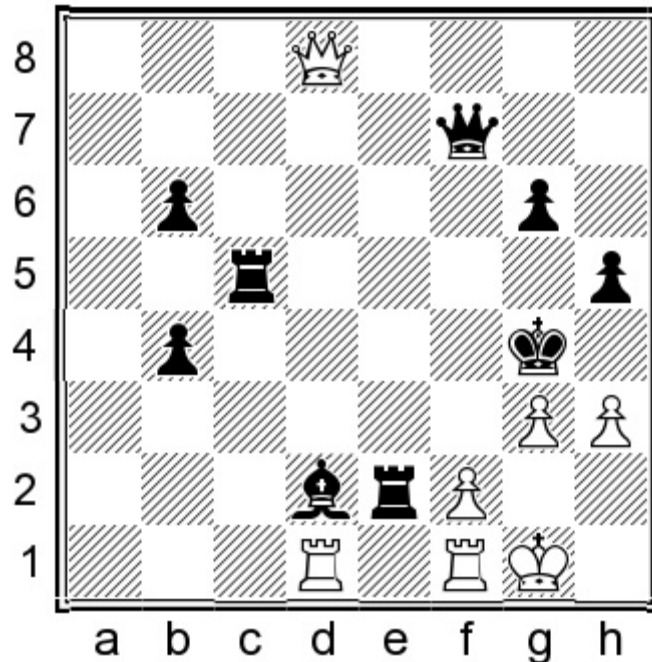


It was the rooks that saved the great Bent Larsen in this game against a local Slovenian player who was close to claiming an important scalp, but eventually failed to do so.

White came up with the winning combination, but there is one hole in it that Larsen skilfully exploits.

34.♖xd2

Correct was 34.♔d8! ♕xf7 35.h3+!



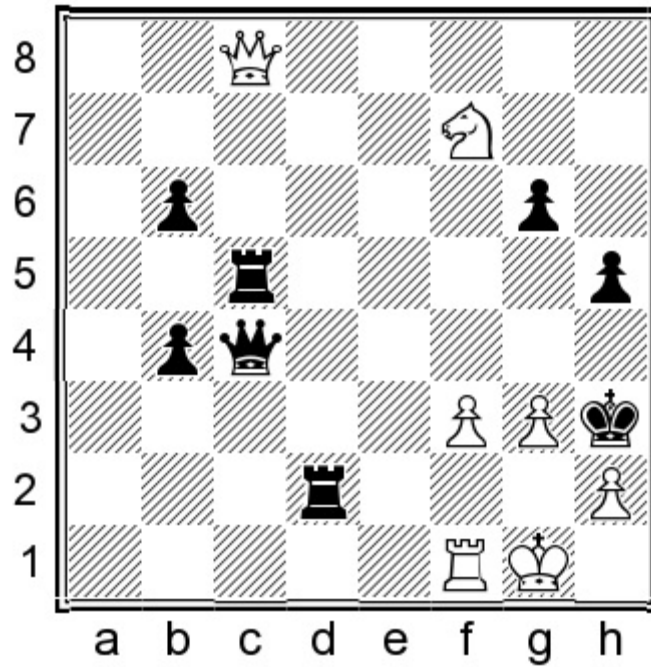
Position after: 35.h3+!

35...♔f5 [the pawn cannot be taken because of mate 35...♔xh3 36.♔h4#] 36.♔d3+! Targeting an unprotected black piece. 36...♖e4 37.f3 And White wins!

34.♖xd2 ♖xd2 35.f3+ ♔h3

35...♔f5 36.♗d6+ White wins the queen with the discovered attack.

36.♔c8+!



Position after: 36. ♔c8+!

This was Jelen's idea and it seems that White is winning, but now follows a fantastic move.

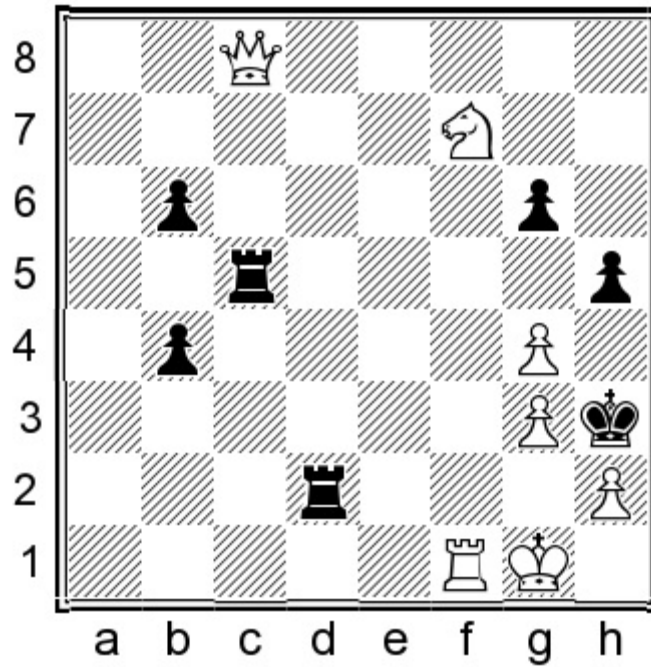
36... ♔g4!!

and suddenly Black saves himself!

36... ♖xc8 allows a nice mate with 37. ♘g5#.

37. ♘g5+!

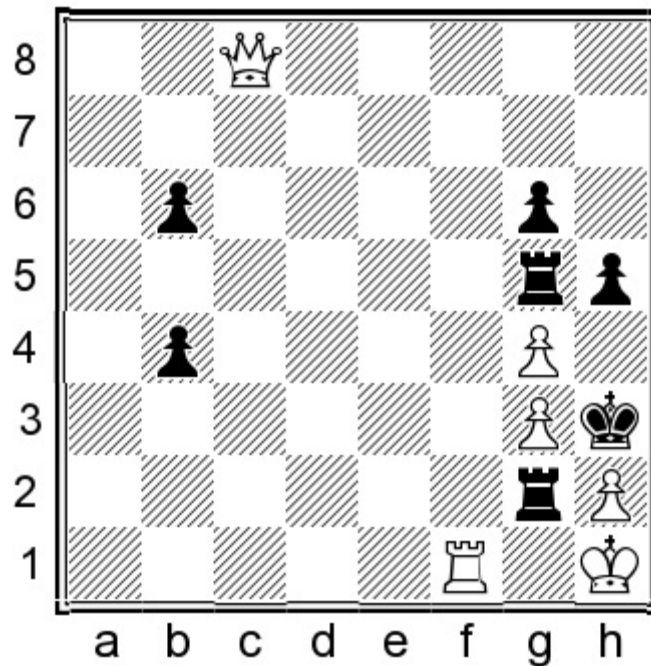
37. fxg4



Position after: 37.fxg4

37...♖g2+!! 38.♔h1 ♜xh2+ 39.♔g1 ♜xc8 And now there is no mate because Black has removed the h2-pawn and the g3-square is now available for his king!

37...♜xg5 38.fxg4 ♜g2+ 39.♔h1



Position after: 39.♔h1

Now the game should end in perpetual check after ...♜xh2, but Larsen tries his last chance to confuse

his opponent and plays

39...♖c5

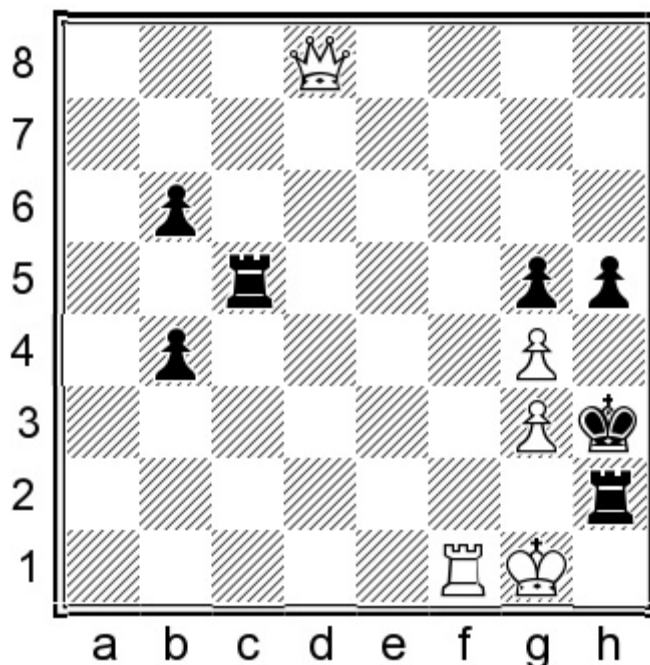
39...♖xh2+ 40.♔g1 ♖g2+ 41.♔h1 is a draw.

40.♕d8?

White makes a losing mistake.

40.♕e6! And the game would be drawn. White must stay on this diagonal in order to have a threat with g4-g5. 40...♖xh2+ 41.♔g1 hxg4 42.♕xg6

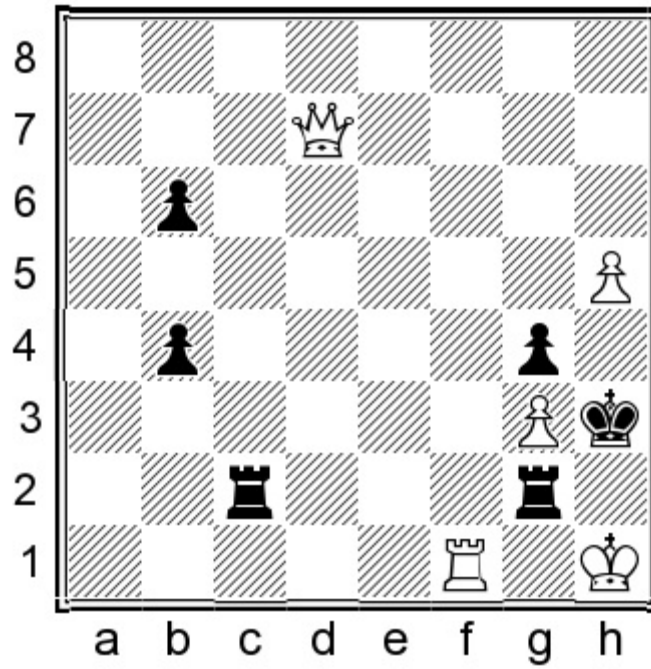
40...♖xh2+! 41.♔g1 g5!!



Position after: 41...g5!!

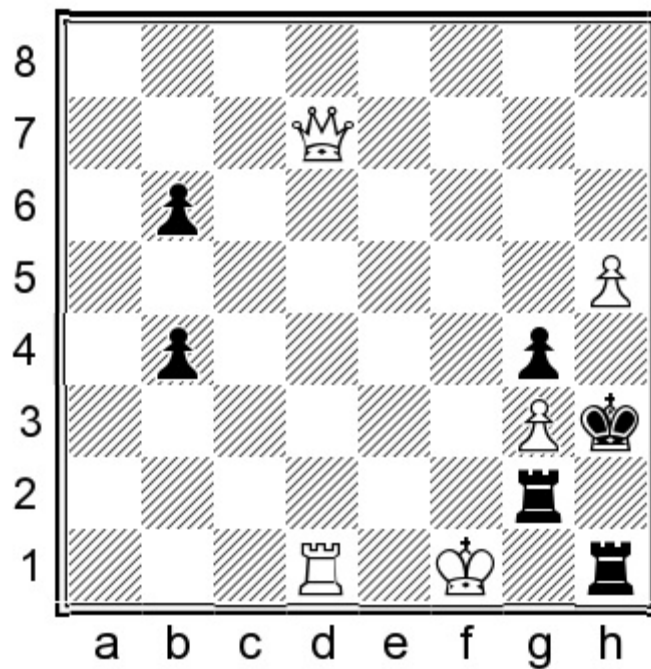
Now there is no longer a mate threat on h4 and Black wins. Suddenly, the power of the rooks dominates the queen and decides the issue. White resigned. The game could continue for example with

42.♕d7 ♖g2+ 43.♔h1 ♖cc2 44.gxh5+ g4!



Position after: 44...g4!

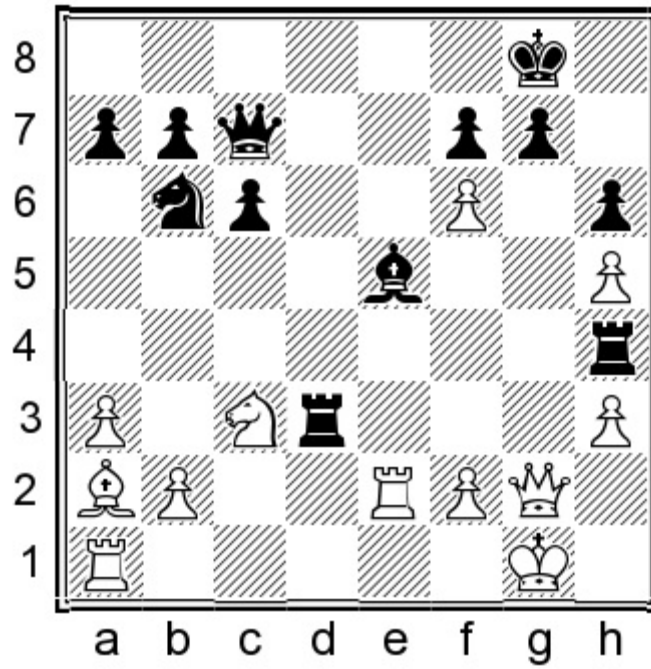
45.♖d1 ♜h2+ 46.♔g1 ♜cg2+ 47.♕f1 ♜h1#!



Position after: 47...♜h1#!

Great power of the rooks!

0-1



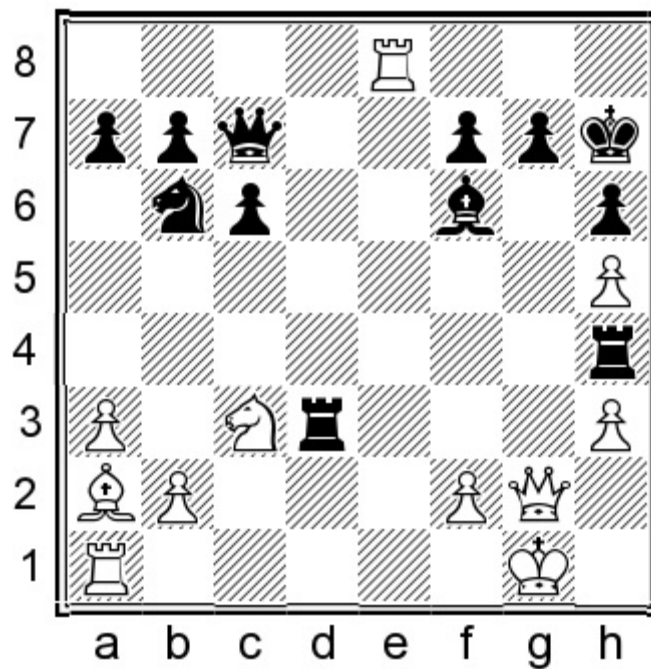
Position after: 25.f6!

The move Gelfand missed!

25...♙xf6

25...g5 26.hxg6 and White wins easily.

26.♖e8+ ♔h7



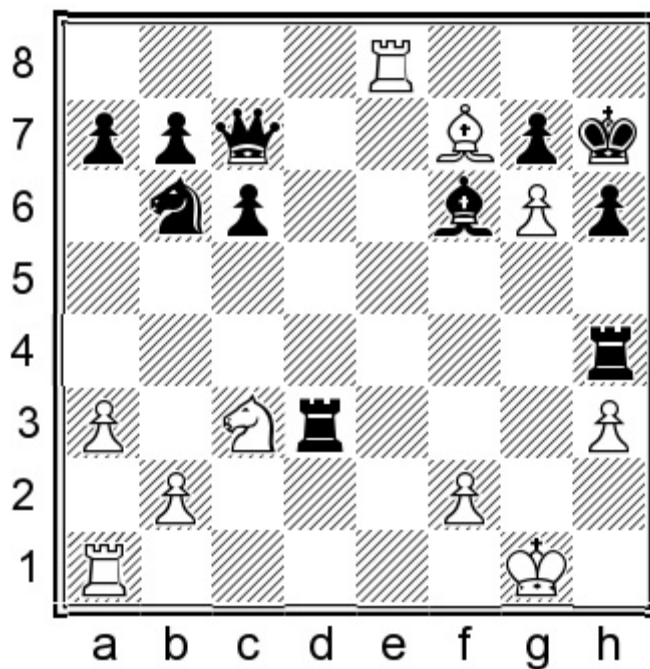
Position after: 26...♔h7

Everything seems to be fine with the black position, but now comes a big surprise.

27. ♔g6+!!

Burying the king!

27...fxg6 28. ♖g8+ ♔h8 29. ♗f7+ ♔h7 30.hxg6#



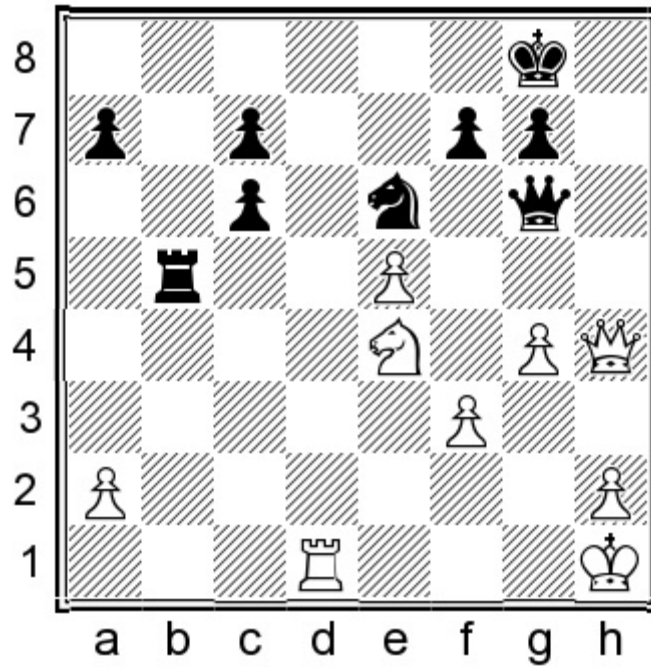
Position after: 30.hxg6#

Mate!

1-0

Example 2

White to move wins

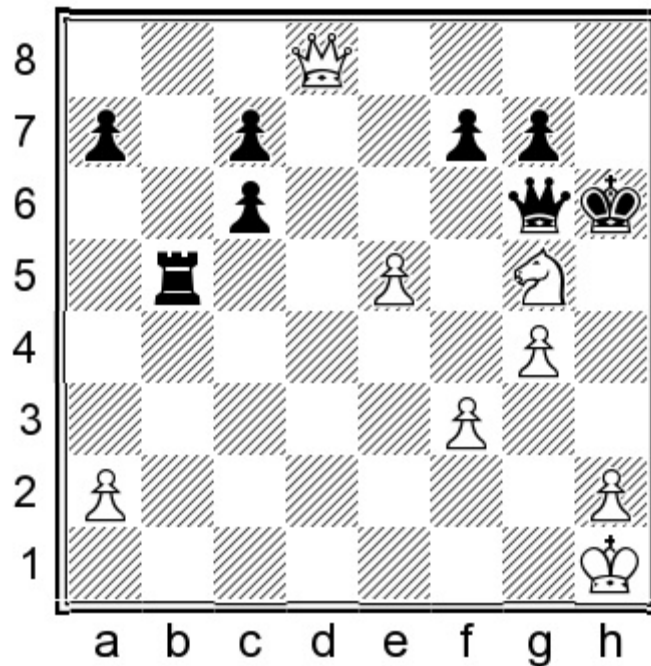


The black king seems safe enough, but a forced combination proves otherwise.

1. ♖d8+!

Every check must be considered!

1... ♜xd8 2. ♚xd8+ ♔h7 3. ♘g5+ ♔h6

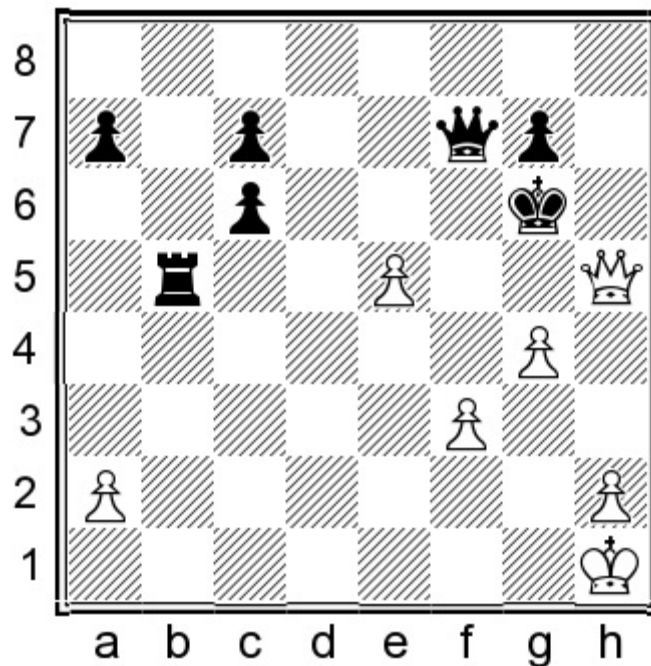


Position after: 3... ♔h6

4. ♘xf7+!!

You should consider every check!

4...♖xf7 5.♖h4+ ♔g6 6.♖h5#



Position after: 6.♖h5#

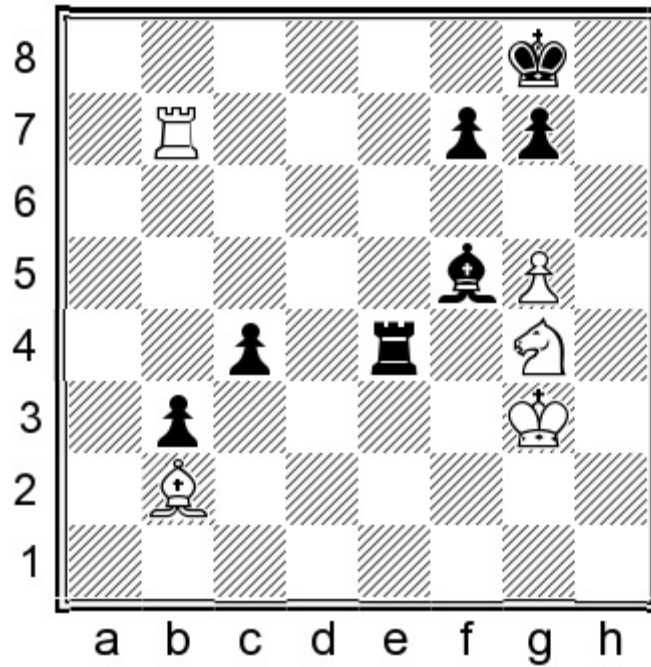
Mate!

1-0

Example 3

From Berczes – Banusz

Zalakaros 2010



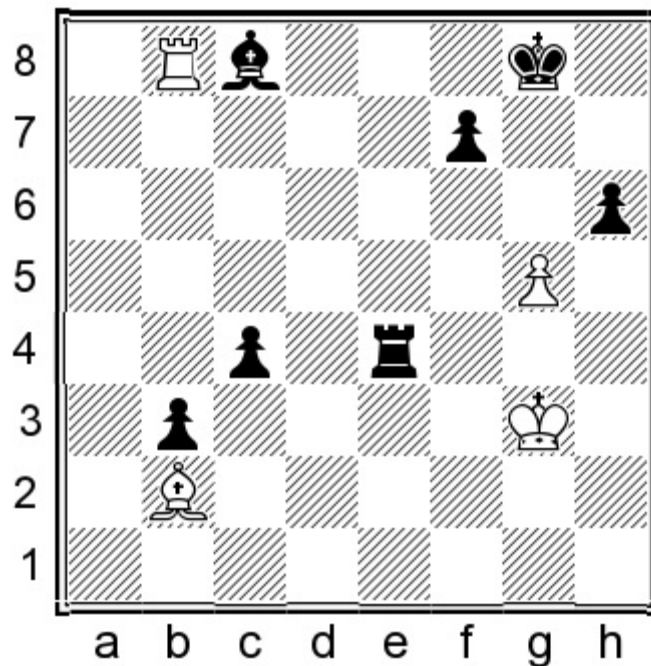
Black is better, but White spots the possibility of attacking the black king!

1. ♖h6+! g×h6 2. ♜b8+

And now Black falls straight into the mate.

2... ♔h7??

There was a great defense: 2... ♖c8!!.



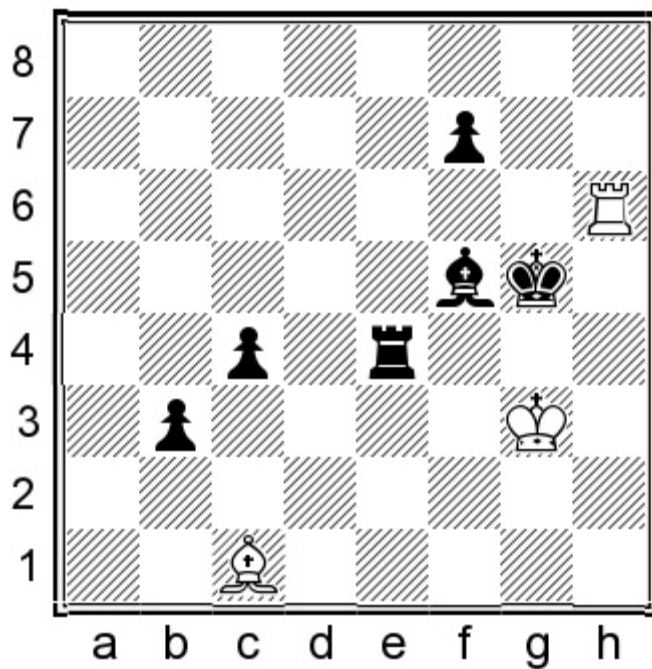
Position after: 2... ♖c8!!

The point is that after 3.♖xc8+ ♔h7 Black can escape through the f5-square. 4.♖h8+ ♔g6 5.♖xh6+ ♕xg5 6.♔c1+ ♕f5!

3.♖h8+ ♔g6 4.♖xh6+ ♕xg5

Now after

5.♔c1+



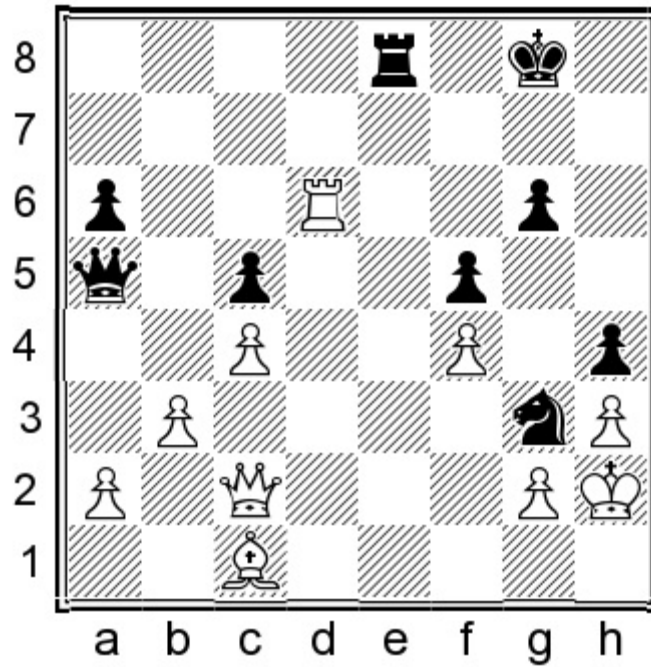
Position after: 5.♔c1+

the black king is in a mating net.

1-0

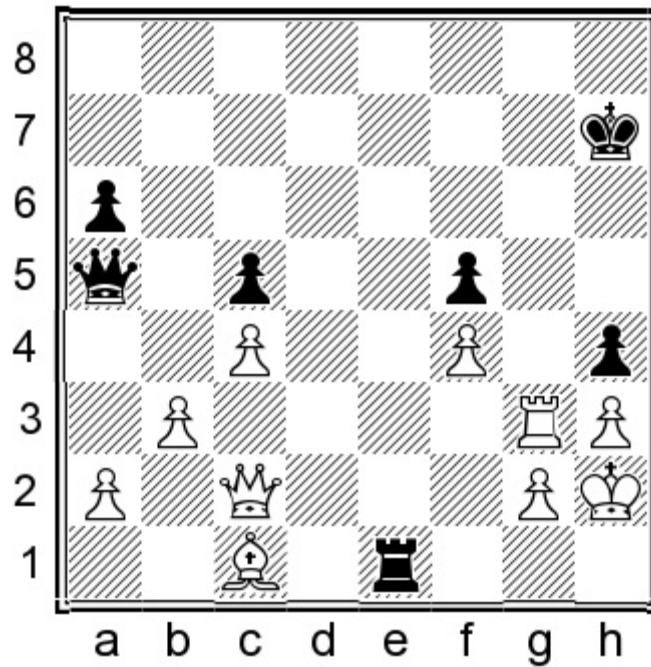
Example 4

From Yakimenko – Karasev
Saint Petersburg 2015



Black notices the possibility of a sudden attack.

37...♖e1! 38.♗xg6+ ♔h7 39.♗xg3



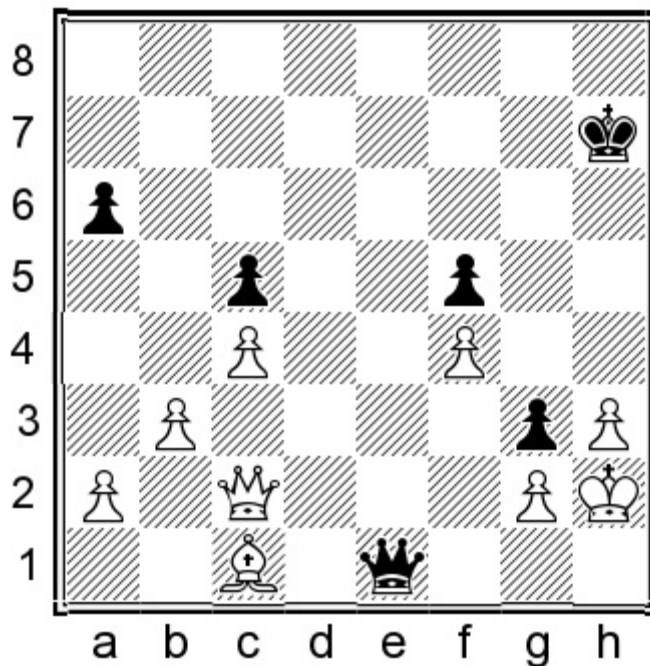
Position after: 39. ♗xg3

White had been counting on this position, thinking that he would defend himself with the exchange sacrifice. But now the nasty point of the previous moves is revealed.

39...♖h1+!!

39...hxg3+ 40.♔xg3 And White would have survived the attack.

40.♔xh1 ♚e1+ 41.♔h2 hxg3#

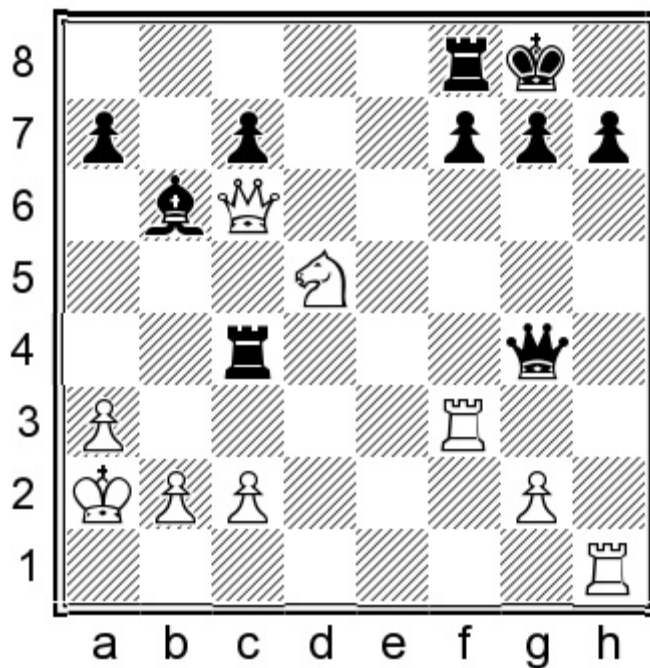


Position after: 41...hxg3#

Mate! 0-1

Example 5

Anastasia's mate



Anastasia's mate is a great example of a sudden attack on a king. Every check should be considered,

2.♖xf7! [2...♔xh7+ doesn't win because of 2...♔xh7 3.♖h3+ ♔xh3 4.gxh3 ♖xc6] 2...♖xf7 3.♔e8+!

1.♔g6!! ♖xg6

A) 1...fxg6 2.♔e7+ ♔h8 3.♖xf8#

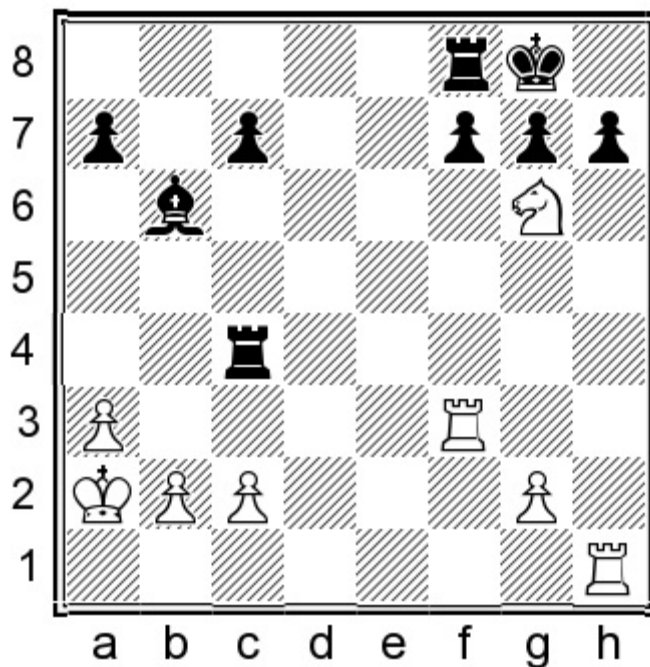
B) 1...hxg6 2.♔e7#

2.♔e7+ ♔h8 3.♔xg6+

If Black takes the white knight he will be mated, so he is forced to play

3...♔g8

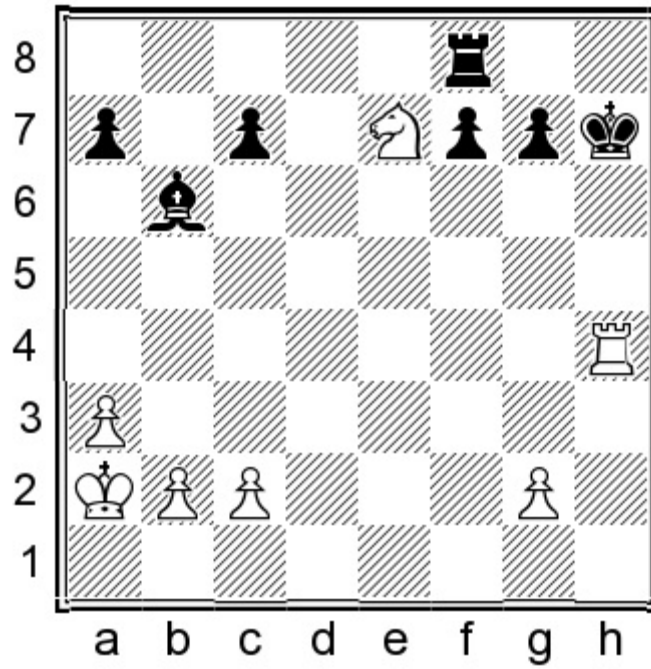
to prolong the battle.



Position after: 3...♔g8

But now White is ready to carry out Anastasia's mate.

4.♔e7+ ♔h8 5.♖xh7+! ♔xh7 6.♖h3+ ♖h4 7.♖xh4#



Position after: 7. ♖xh4#

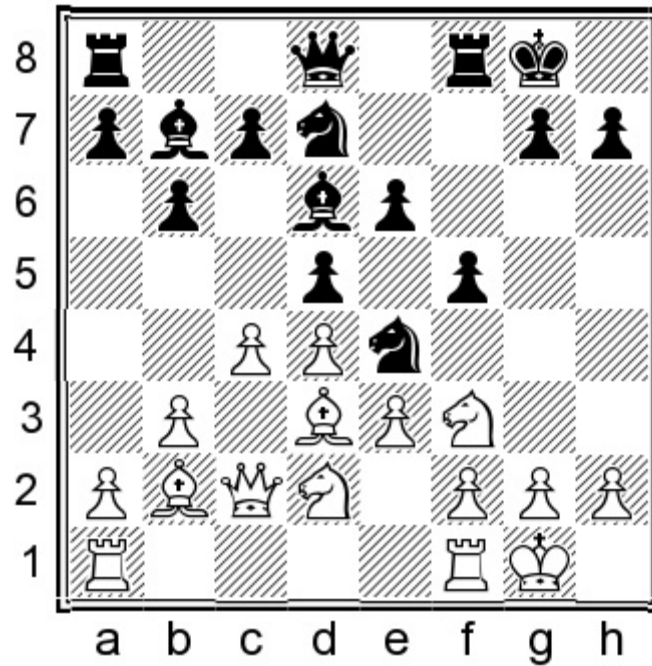
And that's what it looks like! **1-0**

Chapter 10

Burying

Example 1

From Dizdarevic – Miles
Biel 1985

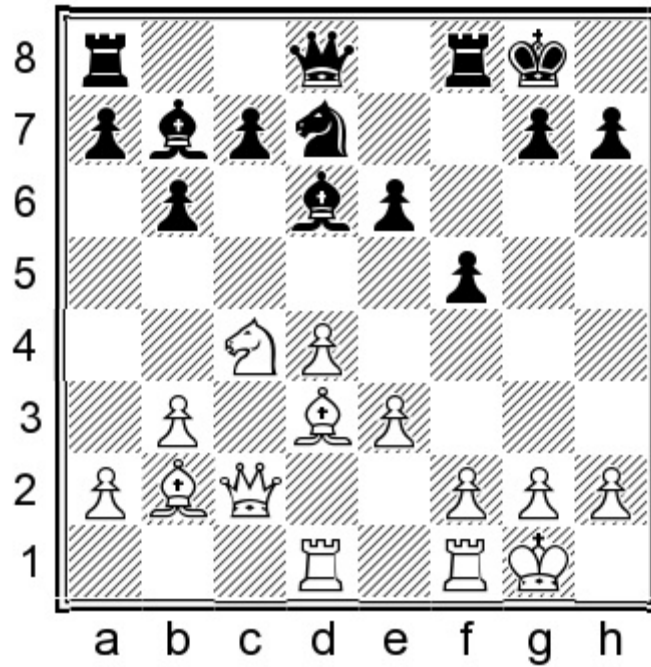


Burying is a very important tactical element when attacking the opponent's king. In this, and the following example, you will see that the same move with the bishop was the killer! At this moment White played carelessly.

11. ♖ad1

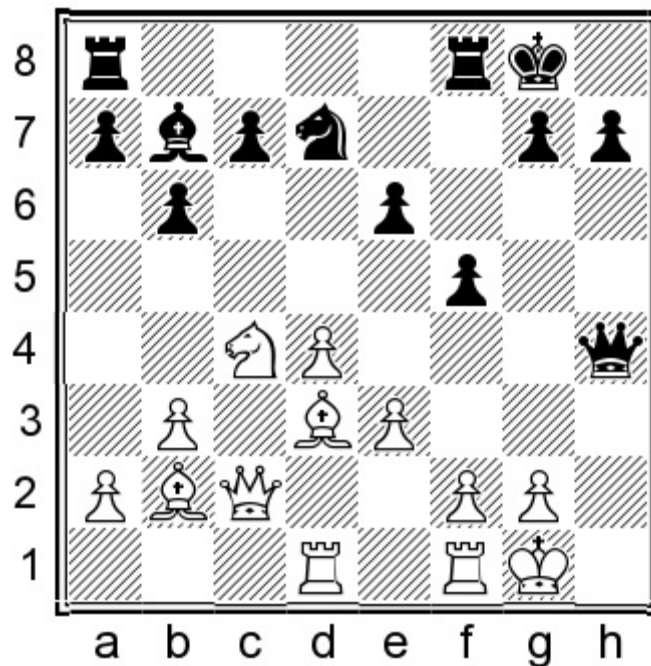
This error allowed a great combination.

11... ♗xd2! 12. ♗xd2 dxc4 13. ♗xc4



Position after: 13. ♖xc4

13... ♗xh2+! 14. ♔xh2 ♚h4+ 15. ♔g1



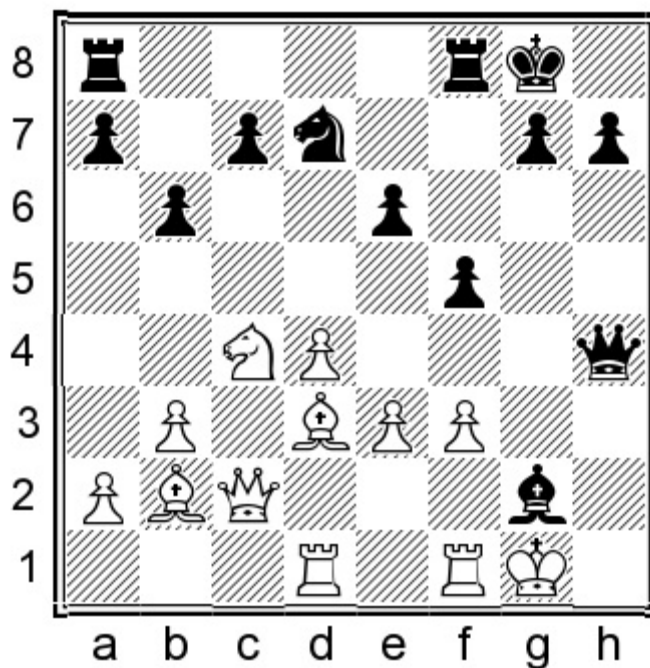
Position after: 15. ♔g1

Dizdarevic had been heading for this position, thinking that he did not have to be afraid of a capture on g2. But now a strike out of the blue follows, which was a complete shock to him!

15... ♗f3!!

Burying!

15...♙xg2 16.f3!



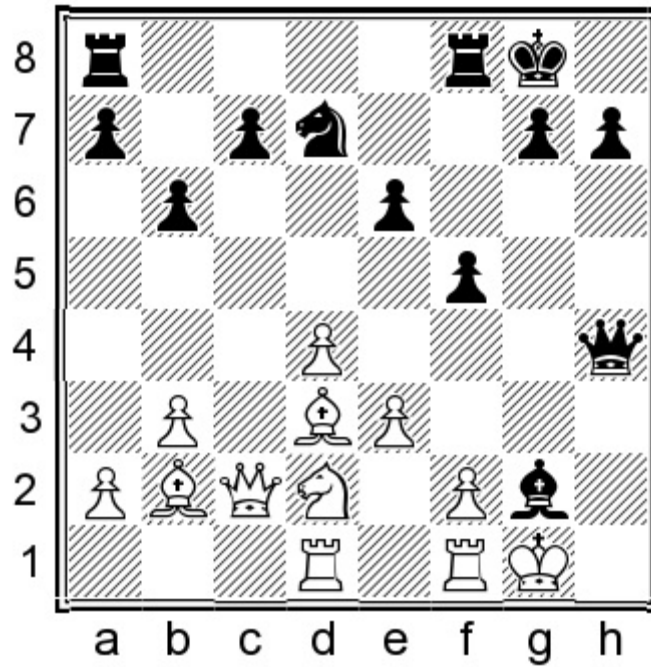
Position after: 16.f3!

This is the defensive idea that White was counting on because White is ready to give his rook for the bishop, and later even the queen. 16...♖f6 17.♙xg2 ♖g6 18.♙xg6! hxg6

16.♘d2

16.gxf3 ♙g5+ 17.♙h2 ♖f6 And Black forces checkmate.

16...♙xg2!



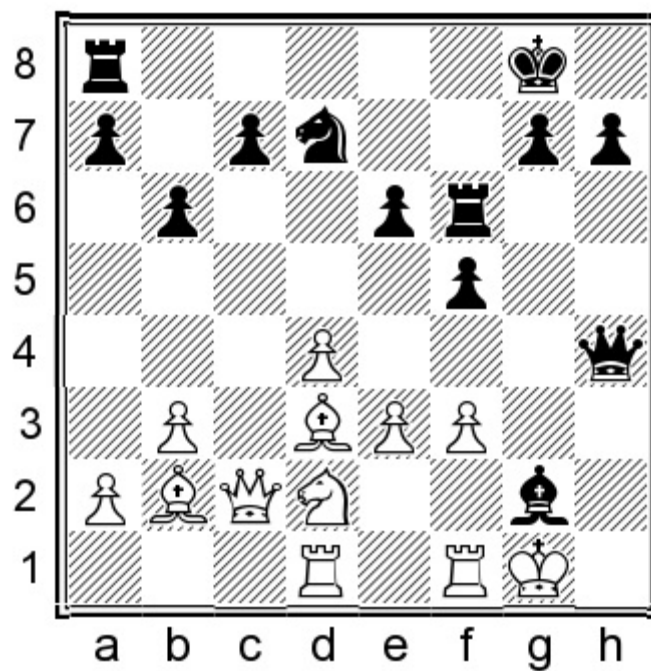
Position after: 16... ♕xg2!

Now the queen can no longer help in defense through the second rank, so this move works now!

17.f3

17. ♖xg2 ♜g4+ 18. ♔h1 ♝f6

17... ♝f6



Position after: 17...♖f6

18.♘c4

18.♔xg2 ♜g6#

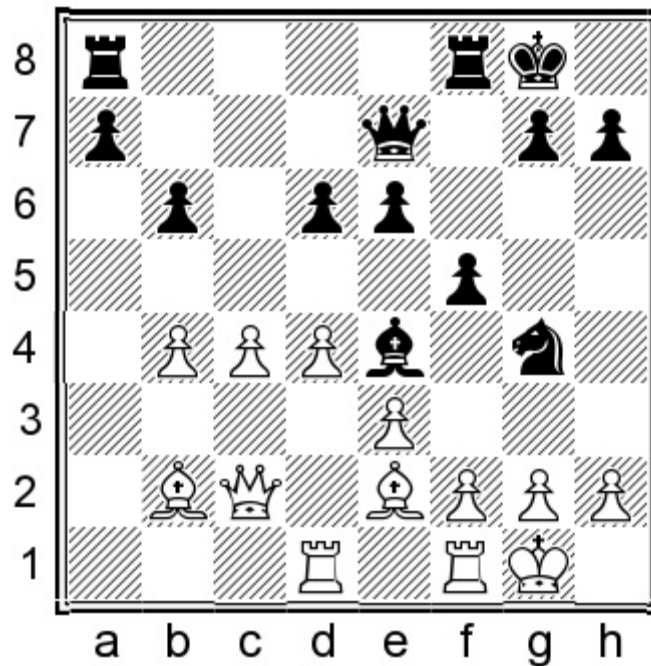
18...♙h3

And because ...♜g6+ comes next, White resigned.

0-1

Example 2

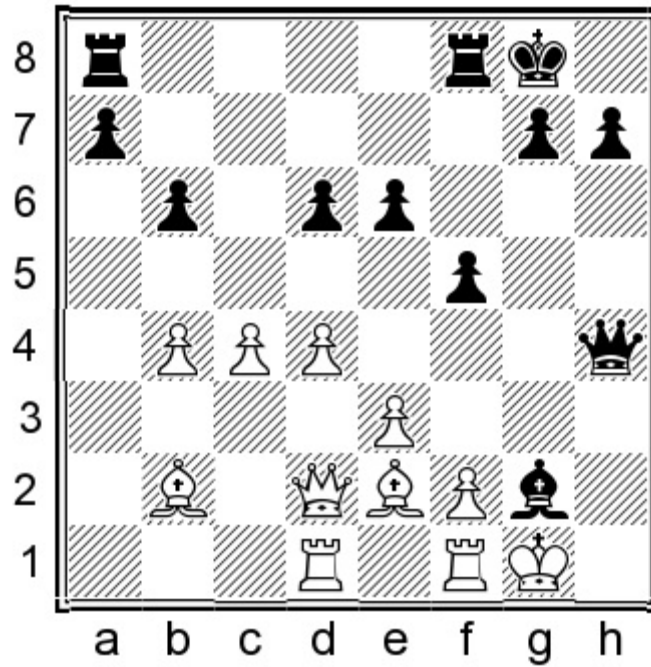
From Svetushkin – Inkirov
Cutro 2009



18.♙d3?

A losing move, but it is not easy even for a strong grandmaster to see why it loses.

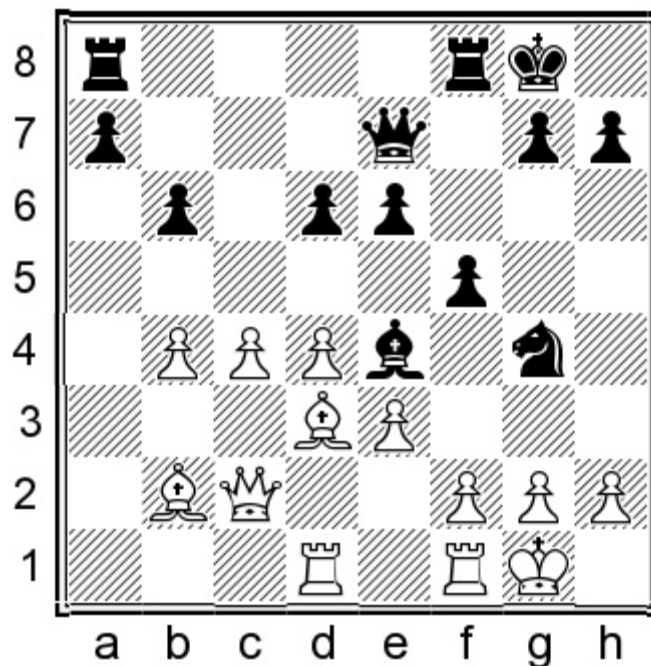
18.♙d2 ♘xh2 19.♔xh2 ♙h4+ 20.♔g1 ♙xg2 leads to a complicated position with a probable draw.



Position after: 20...♙xg2

21.f4! This saving resource is not easy to see while the enemy forces are buzzing around your king!
 [21.♙xg2? loses because of 21...♚g5+! 22.♙h1 ♖f6 mating] 21...♖f6 22.♙f3 ♙xf3 23.♖xf3 ♖g6+
 24.♙f1 ♚h1+ 25.♙e2 ♖g2+ 26.♖f2 ♚h5+ 27.♙e1 ♚h1+ 28.♙e2 It's a draw by repetition.

18.♙d3?



Position after: 18...♙d3?

18...♙f3!!

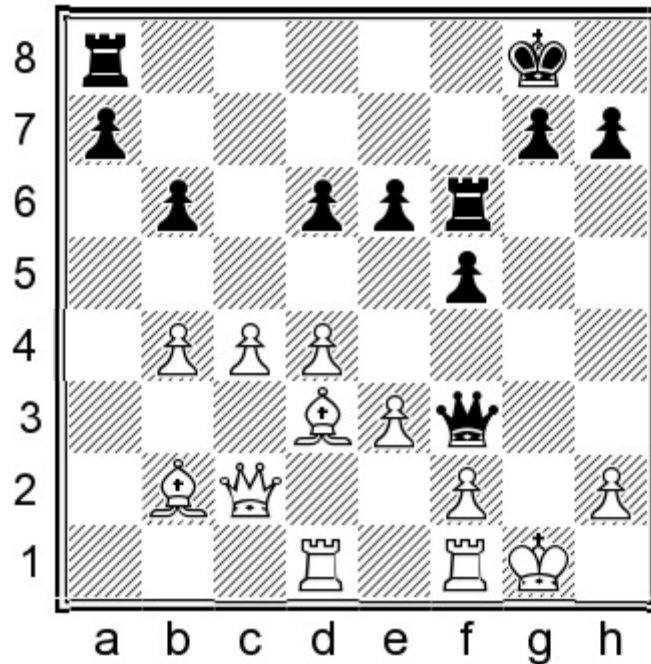
A fantastic resource!

A) 18...♘xh2 is no good anymore on account of 19.♙xe4 fxe4 20.♚xh2 and it's a piece up for White.

B) The winning line from the game now does not work after 18...♙b7 19.h3 ♖g5 20.hxg4 ♖xg4 because of 21.f3.

19.h3

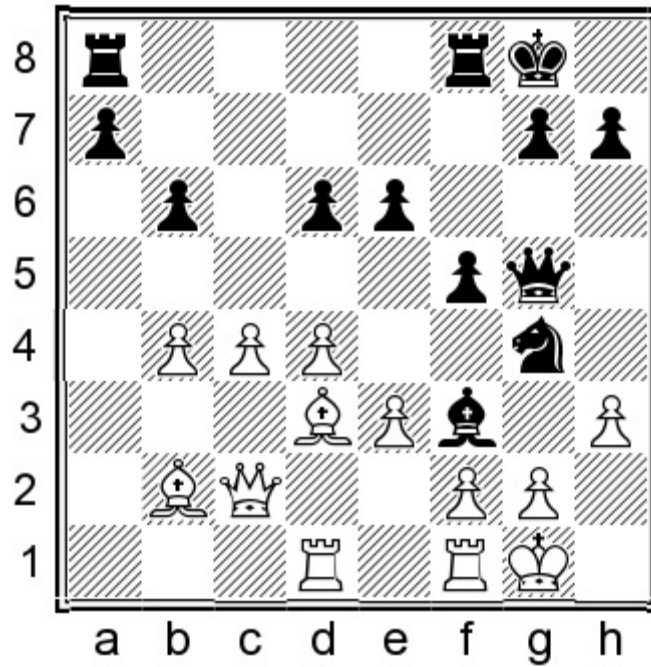
19.gxf3 ♖h4! 20.fxg4 ♖xg4+ 21.♚h1 ♖f3+ 22.♚g1 ♜f6



Position after: 22...♜f6

White's king is doomed.

19...♖g5!!

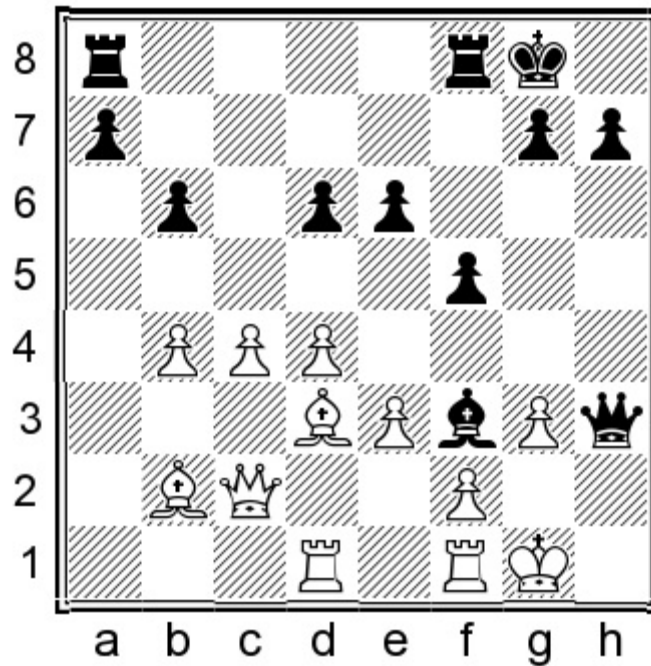


Position after: 19... ♕g5!!

There is no need for 19... ♗xd1? 20. ♖xd1 ♜f6 21. d5.

20. ♖fe1

20. hxg4 ♕xg4 21. g3 ♕h3



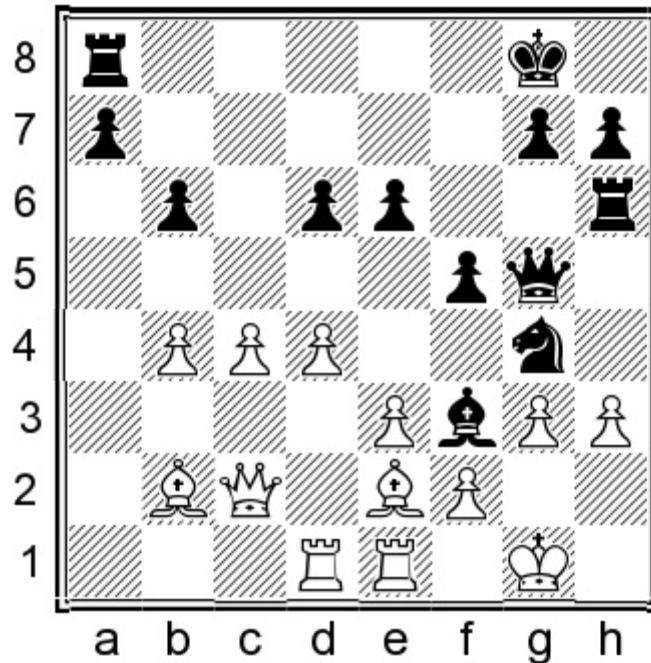
Position after: 21... ♕h3

That's why it is important that the bishop is on f3!

20...♖f6

Also winning is 20...♞e5.

21.g3 ♜h6 22.♔e2



Position after: 22.♔e2

And now the fastest win was

22...♔e4

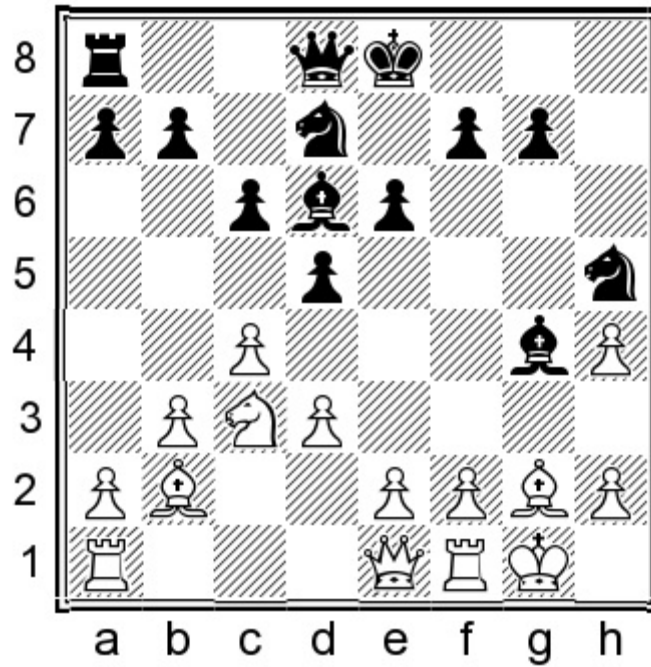
In the game 22...♔xe2 was played and Black had to play for a little longer, but still won the game.

23.♔d3 ♔xd3 24.♖xd3 ♜xh3

0-1

Example 3

From Gomez Sanchez – Otero Acosta
Santa Clara 2017

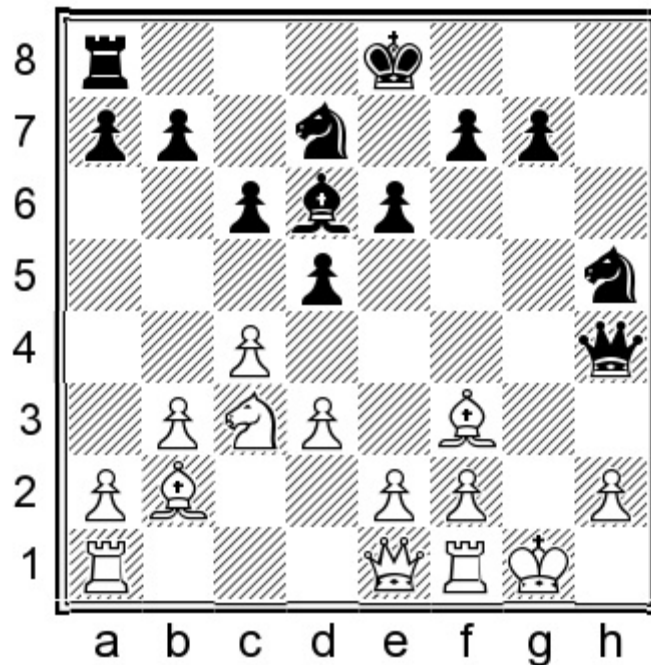


In this position, Black executes a similar motif; this time the bishop comes from the other side.

12...♘f3!! 13.♙c1

White tries desperately to somehow defend himself. The idea is that after ...♙xh4 White could prevent ...♗f4, which would force mate on the diagonal.

A) 13.♙xf3 ♙xh4 The white king is getting mated!



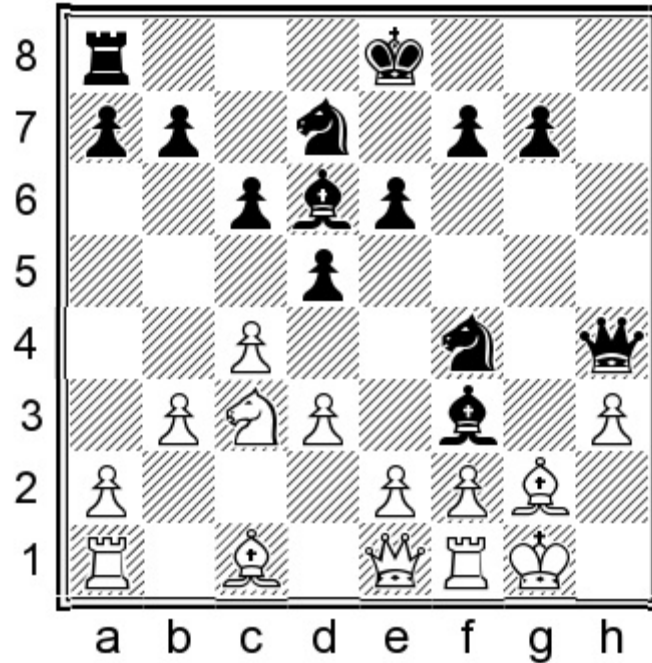
Position after: 13...♙xh4

B) Same goes for 13.exf3 ♙xh4.

13...♙xh4 14.h3

But there are just too many black pieces around the white king.

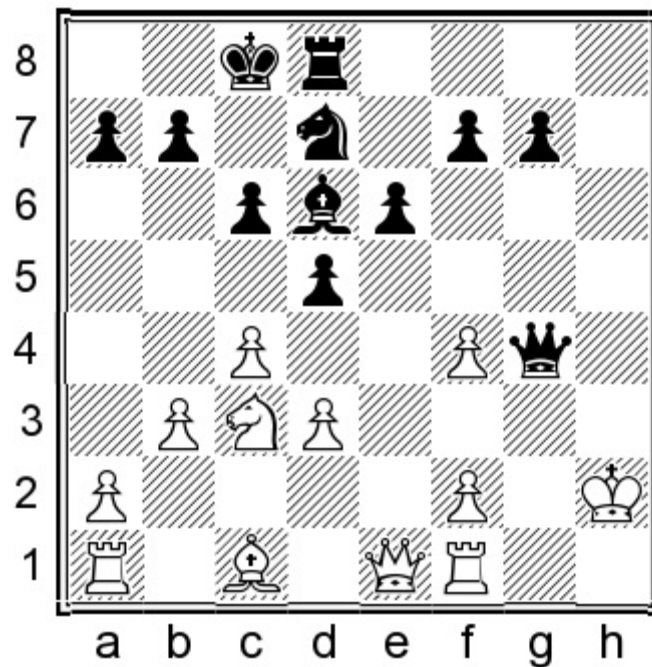
14...♘f4



Position after: 14...♘f4

15.♙xf3

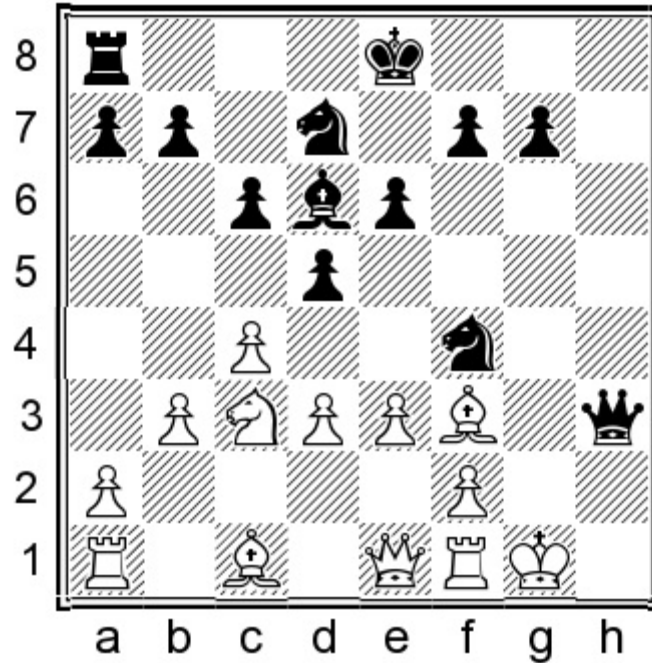
15.exf3 ♘xh3+ 16.♙xh3 ♙xh3 17.f4 ♙g4+ 18.♙h2 0-0-0



Position after: 18...0-0-0

And the rook joins the mating attack with devastating effect!

15...♔xh3 16.e3



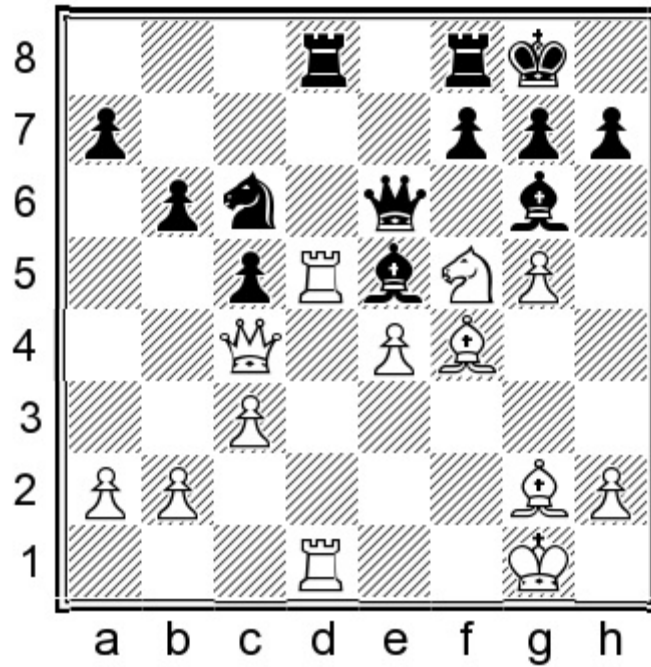
Position after: 16.e3

16...♗e2+! 17.♔xe2 ♔h2# 0-1

Example 4

From Sean – Csiki

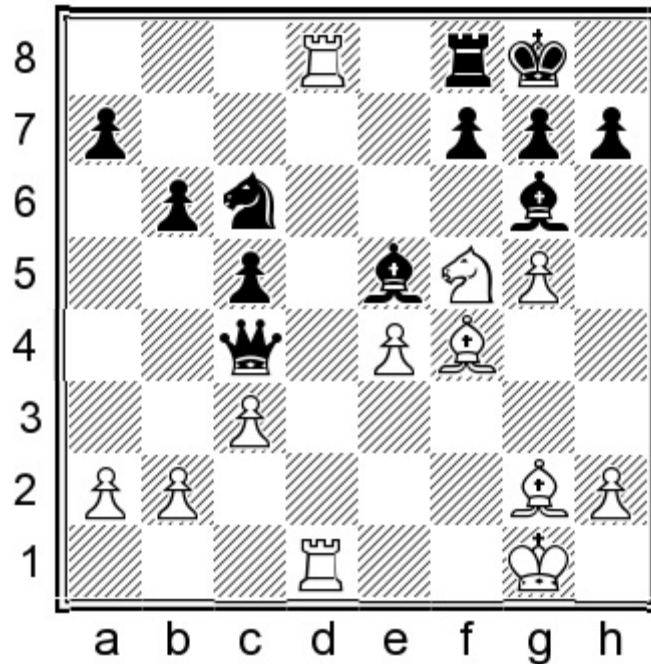
Zalakaros 2017



A nice burying motif appears in this example. Again, every capture should be considered. At first it seems that 1.♖xd8 is not a serious candidate move, but is that really so?

1.♖xd8!! ♔xc4

The queen must be taken because Black loses a piece after 1...♗xd8 2.♔xe6 fxe6 3.♗e7+ ♔f7 4.♗xg6 ♔xg6 5.♗xe5.



Position after: 1...♔xc4

And now another sacrifice for the sake of burying!

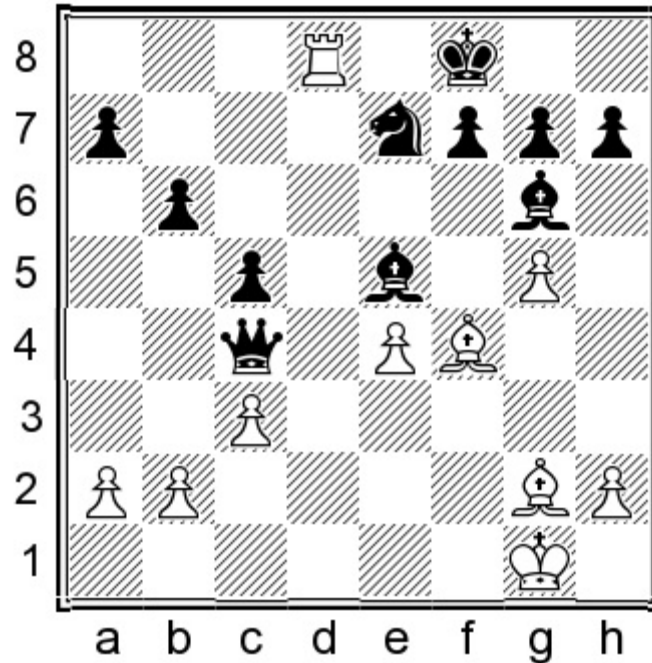
2. ♖e7+!! ♜xe7

2... ♗h8 3. ♖xf8#

3. ♖xf8+ ♜xf8

And since now the black king is buried, the mate follows!

4. ♖d8# 1-0

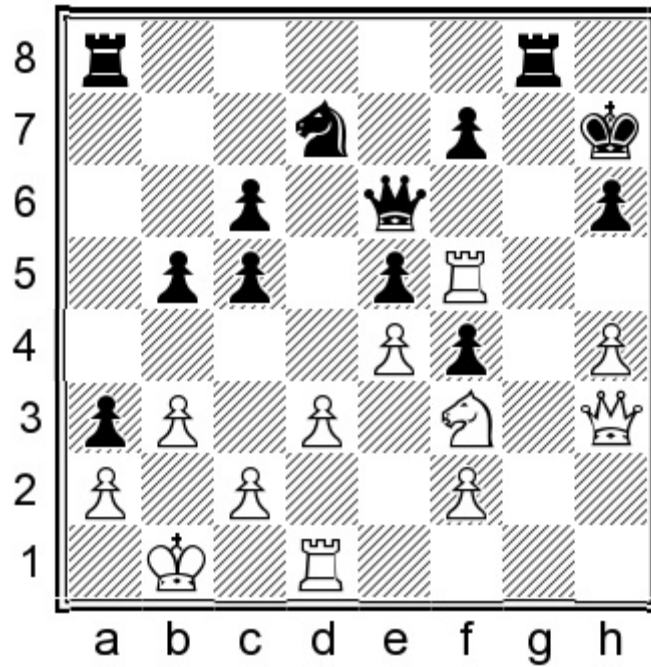


Position after: 4. ♖d8#

Example 5

From Anand – Grischuk

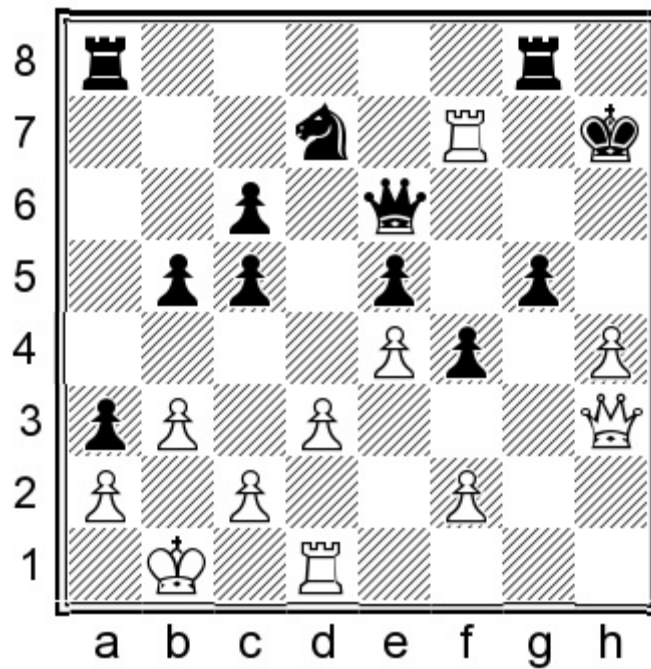
Moscow 2018



For former World Champion Anand it's not a big deal to notice the motif of burying even with little time on his clock!

A nice little combination follows.

27. ♖g5+! hxg5 28. ♜xf7+!!

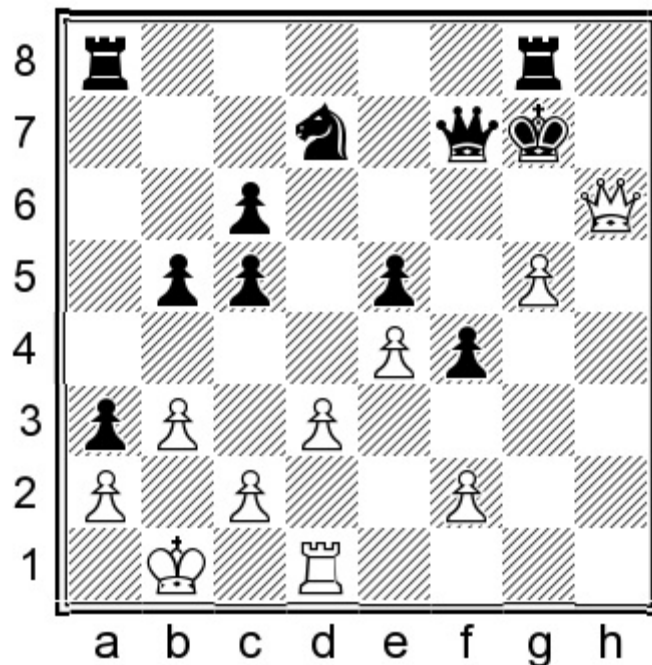


Position after: 28. ♜xf7+!!

28... ♜xf7 29. hxg5+ ♔g7

And after the black king is buried, White delivers the mate.

30. ♔h6#!



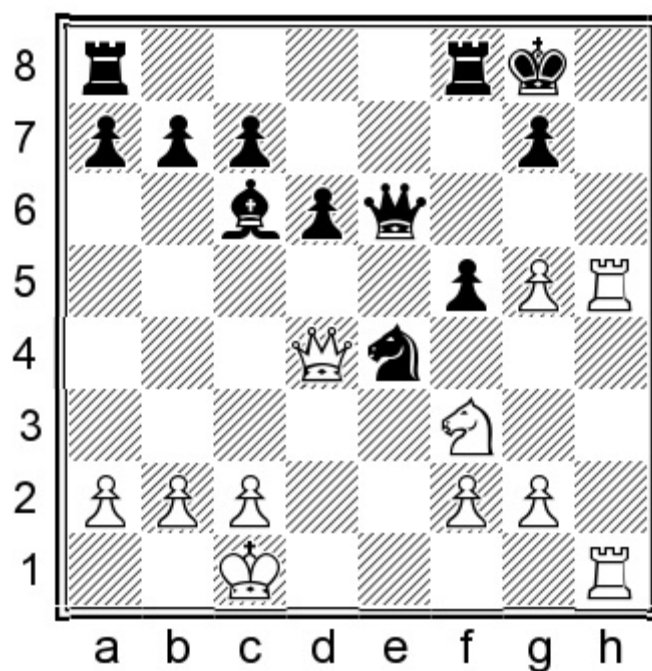
Position after: 30. ♔h6#!

1-0

Example 6

From Alekhine – Hoelsder

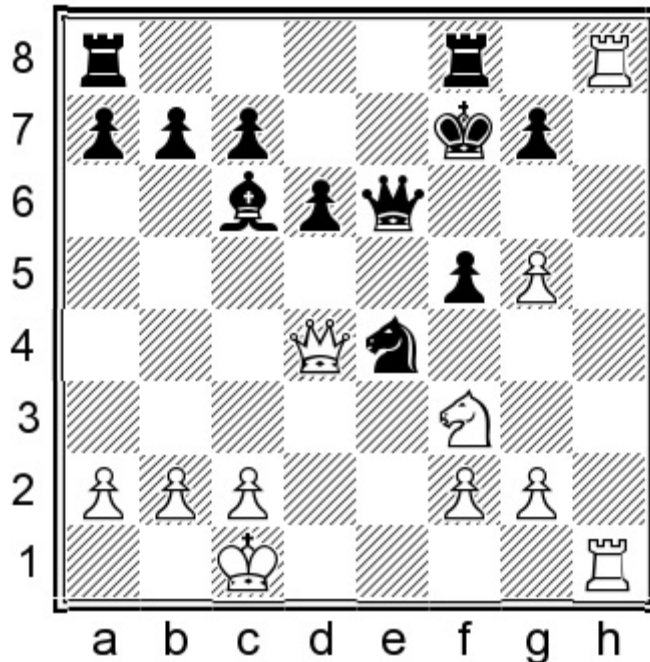
Amsterdam 1933



This example is similar. With a series of strong moves White buries the black king.

1.♘e5!!

A) The black king runs away after 1.♖h8+ ♔f7



Position after: 1...♔f7

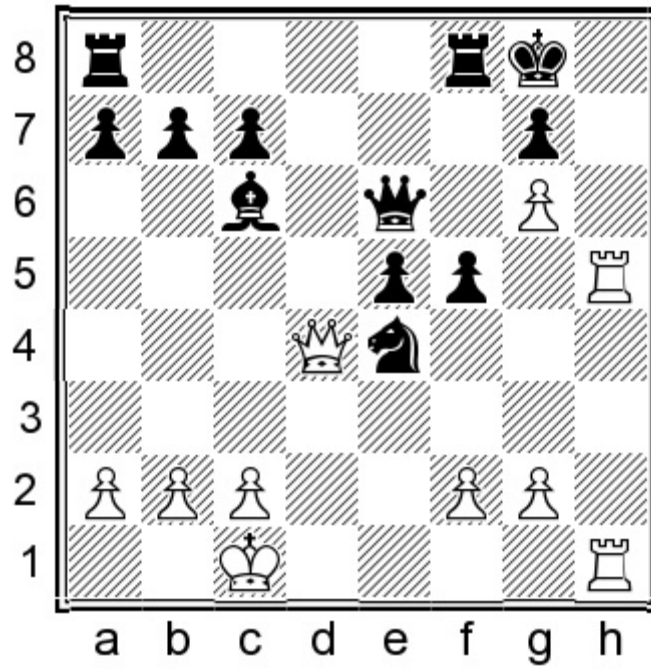
2.♕xg7+ ♔xg7 3.♖1h7+ ♔g6 4.♖h6+ ♔f7 5.♖8h7+ ♔e8 6.♖xe6+ ♔d8.

B) And 1.g6 ♕xg6 2.♕c4+ d5 also leads nowhere.

1.♘e5!! dx5

1...♕xe5 2.g6! Burying!

2.g6!



Position after: 2.g6!

2...♔xg6 3.♔c4+

And since Black can no longer play ...d6-d5, Black must bury himself.

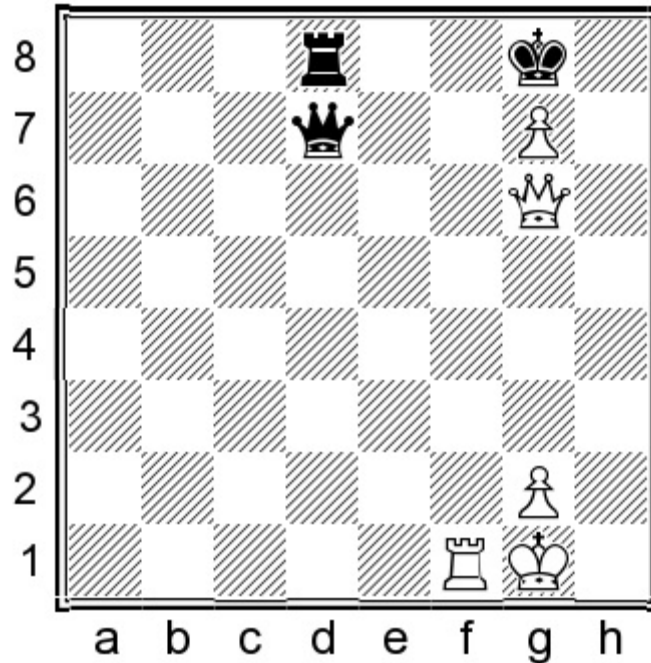
3...♖f7 4.♖h8# 1-0

Chapter 11

Underpromotion to a knight

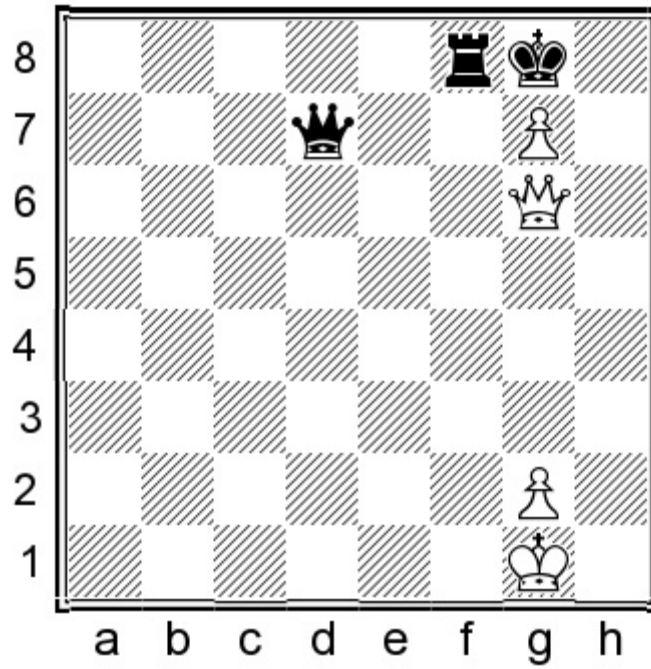
Example 1

White to move wins



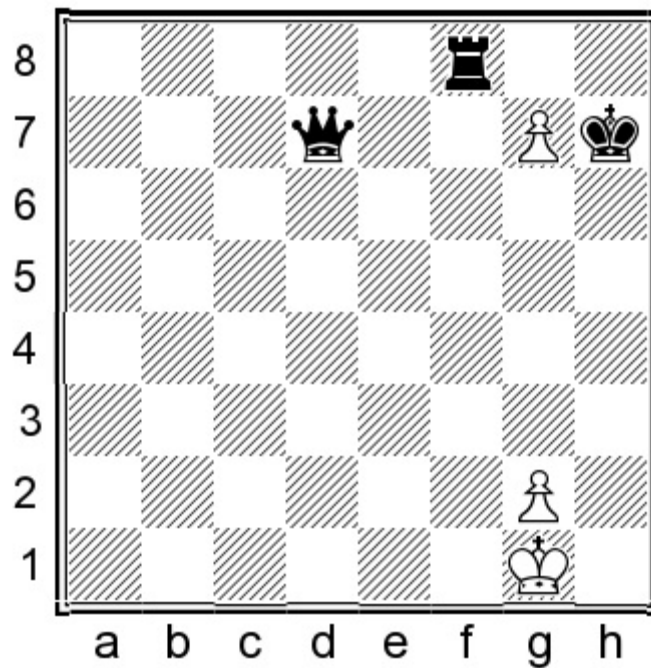
Why is it important that you know different tactical motifs? Because it will make it easier for you to convert advantages. For example, in this position, if you do not know the motif, you may be struggling for a lot of moves. But if you are familiar with this motif, you know that the best move is

1. ♖f8+! ♜xf8



Position after: 1... ♖xf8

2. ♙h7+!! ♔xh7

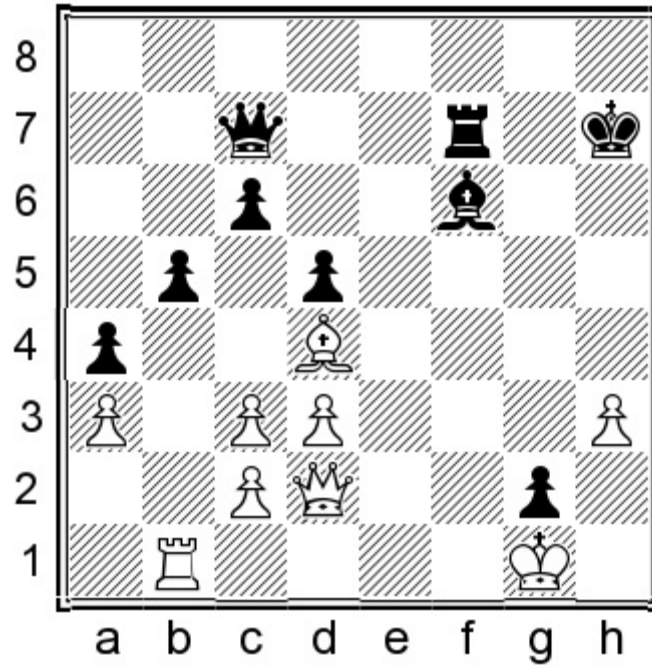


Position after: 2... ♔xh7

3. ♗xf8=♘+ ♔g7 4. ♘xd7

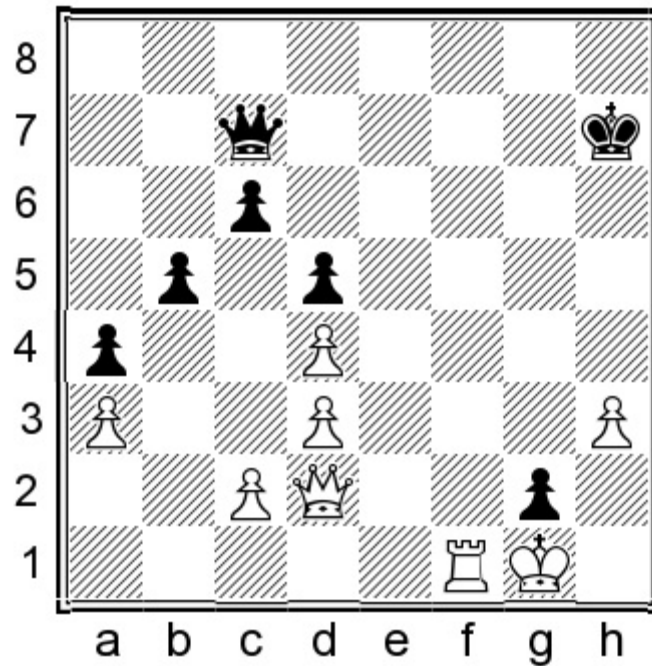
And since you still have one g-pawn the game is easy to win.

Example 2
Black to move wins



Once you know the motif, it's easier to spot the idea a few steps earlier. In this example you can see that even with a lot of pieces on the board it can be part of a winning combination!

1...♙xd4+! 2.cxd4 ♜f1+! 3.♞xf1



Position after: 3.♞xf1

3...♙h2+!! 4.♔xh2 gxf1=♞+ 5.♔g2 ♞xd2 6.♔f2 b4

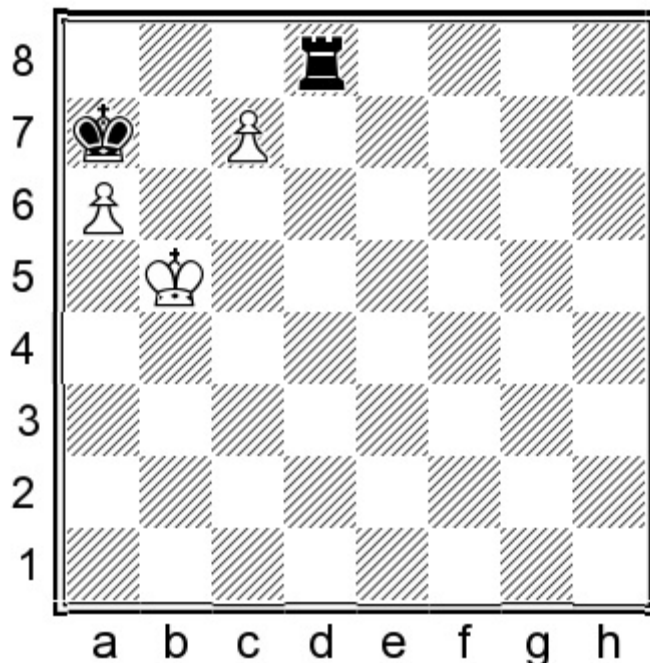
And Black wins!

0-1

Example 3

From Khamrakulova – Ubiennykh

Athens 2001



In this diagram, you can clearly see a position where underpromotion to a knight is the only way to victory. The promotion of all other pieces leads to a draw!

78.cxd8=♞!

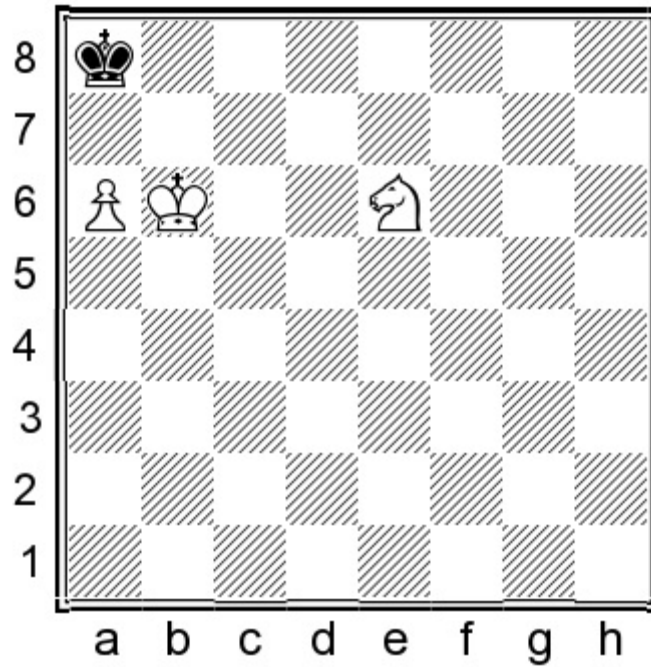
A knight can expel the king from both corners, unlike a bishop.

A) 78.cxd8=♚ Stalemate.

B) 78.cxd8=♝ And the position with a wrong bishop will arise since this bishop can give check to a7, but it cannot expel the king from the a8-square. The draw is inevitable.

C) 78.cxd8=♞ Stalemate!

78.cxd8=♞! ♔b8 79.♔b6 ♔a8 80.♞e6



Position after: 80. ♖e6

And the black king was forced out.

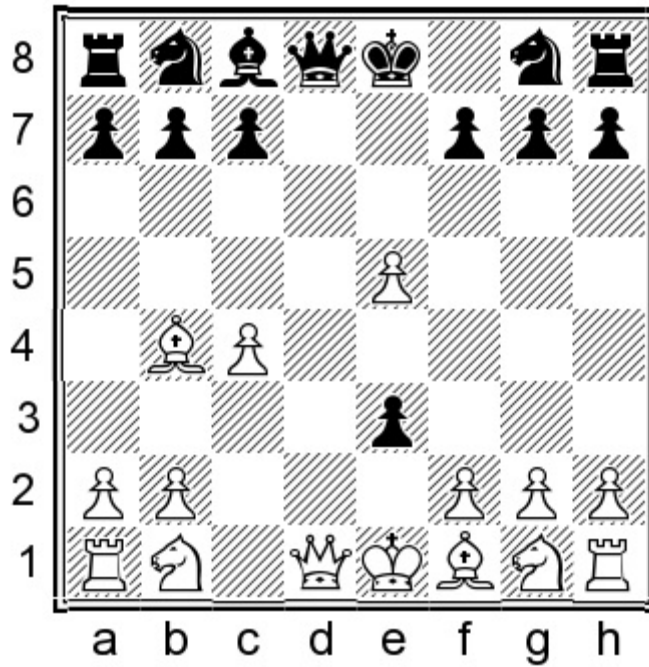
1-0

Example 4

Miniature in the Albin Counter Gambit

The most famous miniature in the opening that includes underpromotion to a knight is following one.

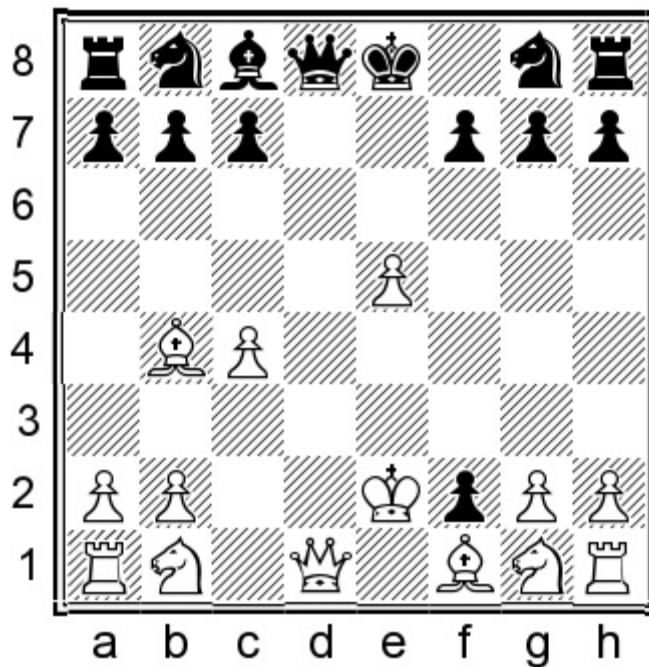
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 d4 4.e3 ♗b4+ 5.♕d2 dxe3 6.♕xb4??



Position after: 6. ♗xb4??

6.fxe3 is the only move

6...exf2+! 7.♔e2



Position after: 7. ♔e2

It seems everything is all right for White, who has won the bishop pair, but now comes the strike out of the blue!

7...fxg1=♖+!!

A) 7...fxg1=♖ 8.♔xd8+ ♕xd8 9.♖xg1 is what White was relying on.

B) 7...♗g4+ loses for Black because of 8.♘f3.

8.♖xg1 ♗g4+!

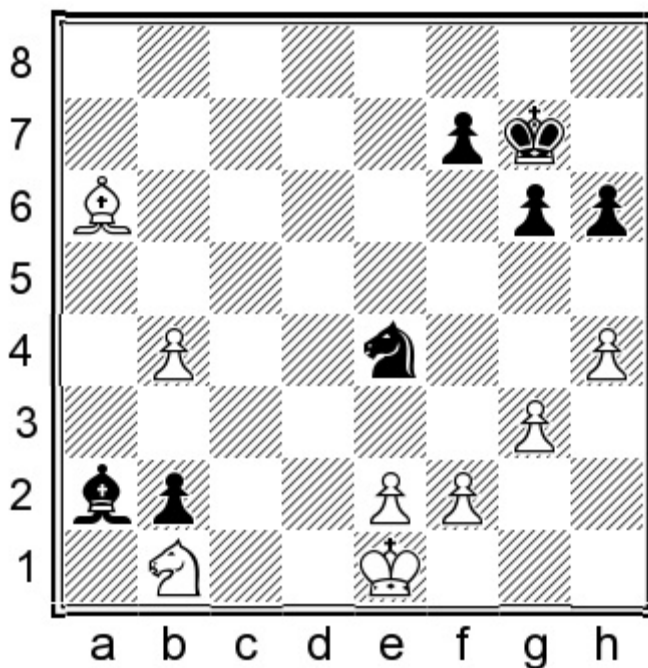
Now White can no longer play ♘f3.

0-1

Example 5

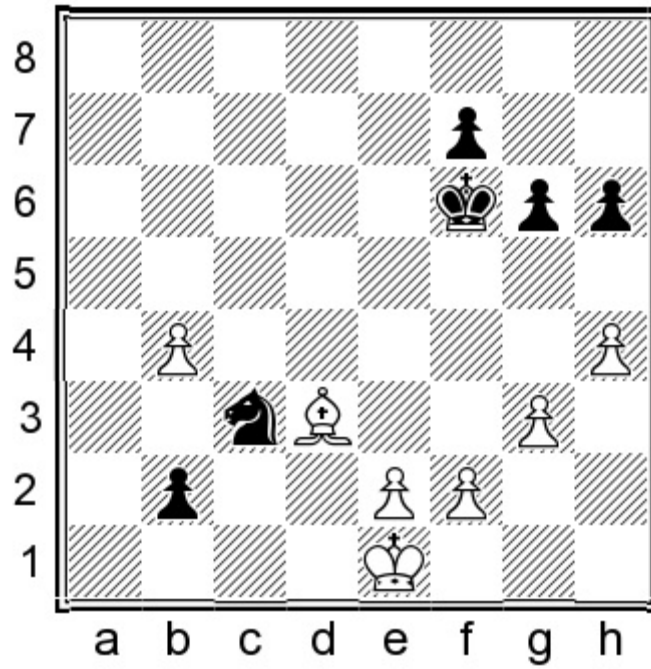
From A. Saric – Jankovic

Zagreb 2012



Underpromoting to a knight instead of queen is also an important defensive resource. You can see for yourself in this example. I knew I would win the piece in this position, but I was not aware that White's defensive resources were so strong.

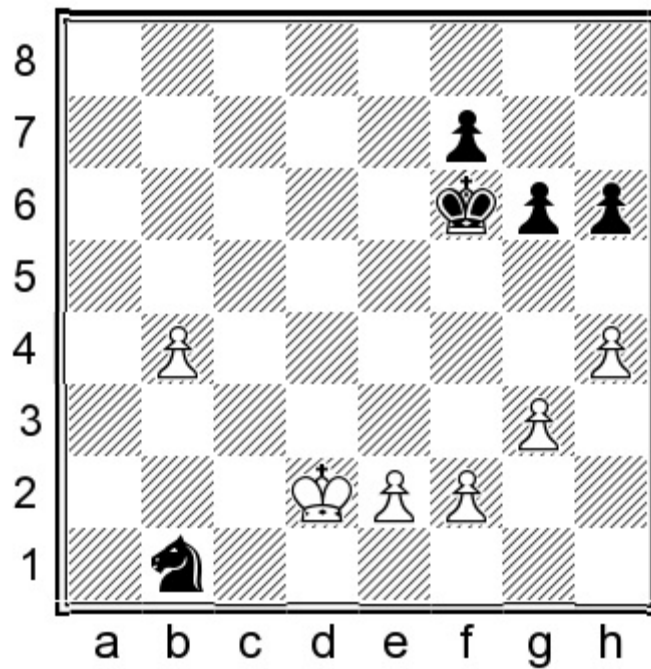
39.♗d3 ♗xb1 40.♗xb1 ♘c3 41.♗d3 ♖f6



Position after: 41... ♔f6

Activating the king in the endgame is very important!

42. ♔d2 b1=♚ 43. ♕xb1 ♖xb1+



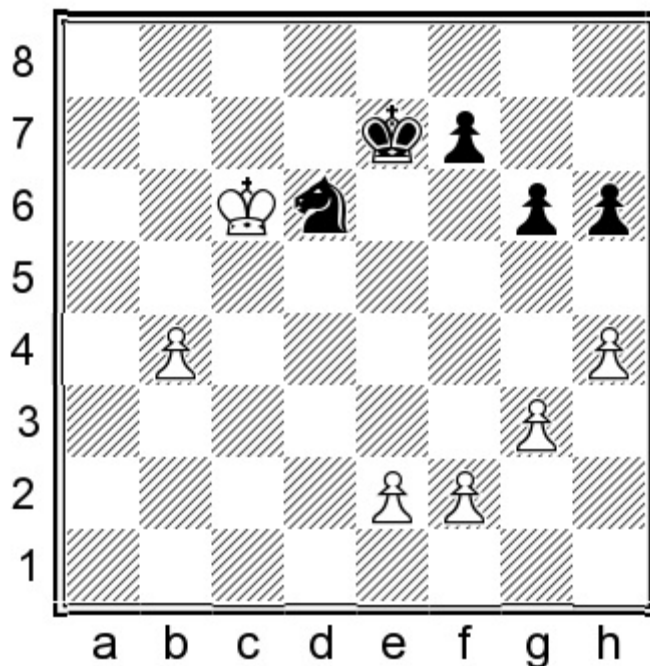
Position after: 43... ♖xb1+

44. ♔c2?

Saric naturally captures the tempo, but another move was also an option.

44.♔d3! was better.

44...♖a3+ 45.♗b3 ♖b5 46.♕c4 ♖d6+ 47.♗d5 ♕e7 48.♗c6?

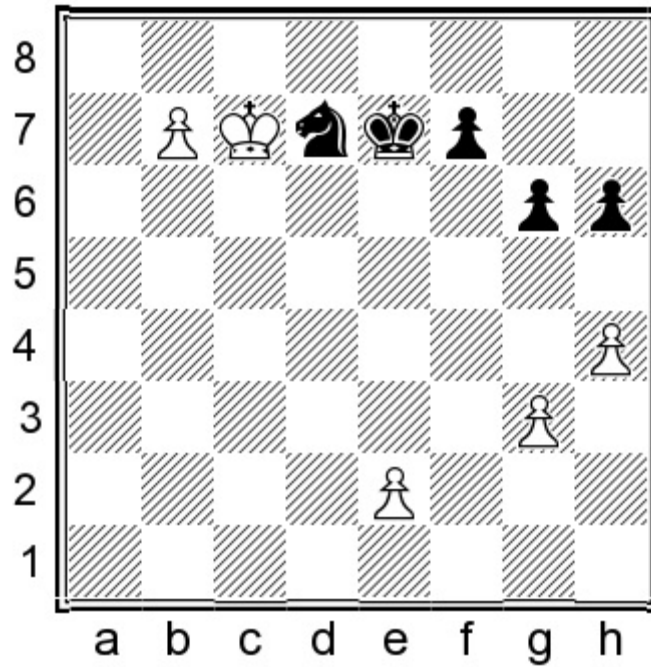


Position after: 48.♗c6?

The losing move. White logically wants to push his passed pawn as far as possible, but he will leave his kingside unprotected.

48.g4! leads to a draw!

48...♖e4! 49.b5 ♖xf2 50.b6 ♖g4 51.b7 ♖e5+ 52.♕c7 ♖d7

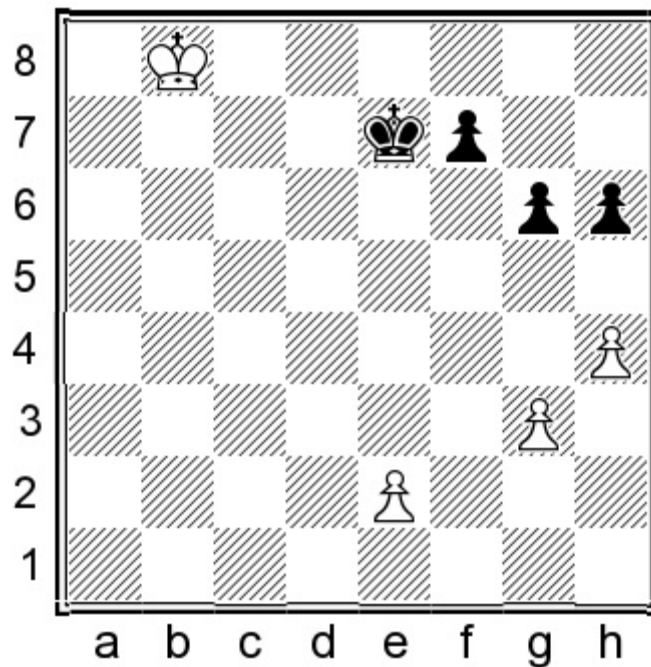


Position after: 52...♞d7

53.g4!

My colleague, grandmaster Saric, now fantastically sees his chance.

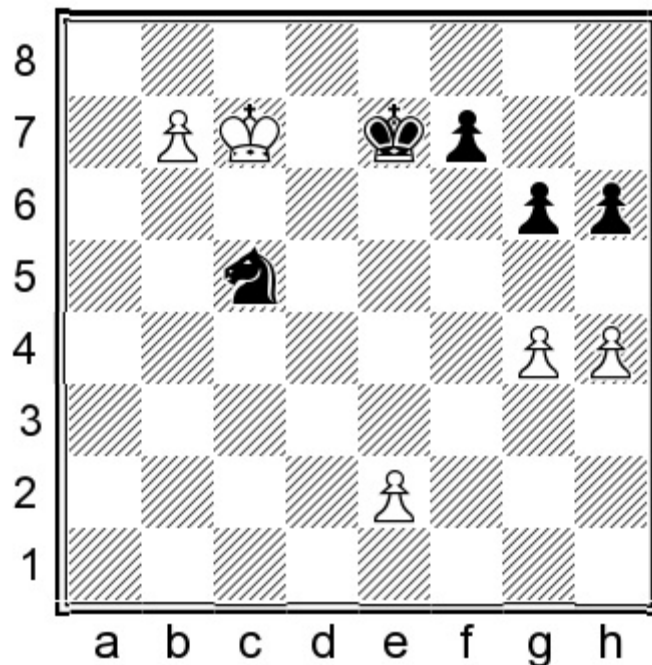
I had calculated that I was winning after 53.b8=♚ ♞xb8 54.♚xb8



Position after: 54.♚xb8

54...♞d7! 55.♚b7 g5 56.hxg5 hxg5 57.e3 ♚e6 58.♚c7 ♚f5 59.♚d7 ♚g4.

53...♖c5



Position after: 53...♖c5

It looks like I'm winning but now comes a clever surprise.

54.b8=♘!!

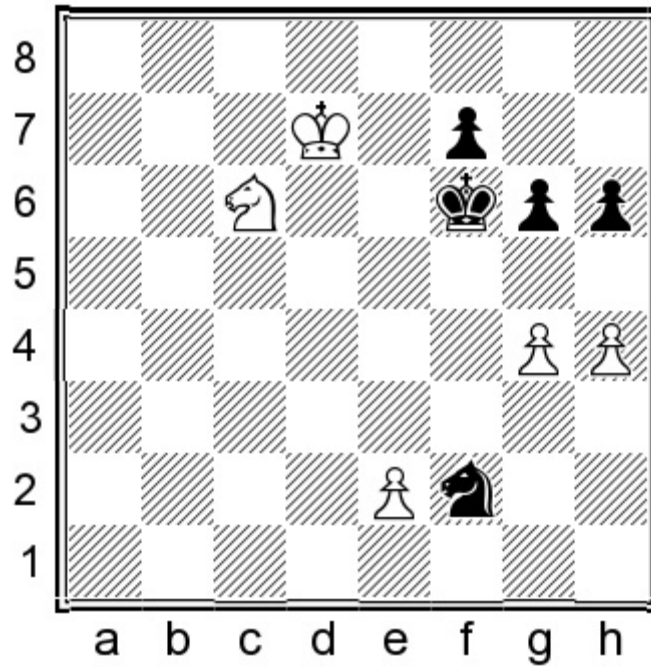
Underpromotion to a knight! Now we are playing a knight endgame with less material, which is quite difficult to convert. Black is better because he has a more active king and the white pawns are unprotected on the kingside, but, as I said, there is very little material left on the board.

54.b8=♙? ♖a6+ leads to an easy win.

54...♗e4?

54...♗e6+! 55.♙c6 ♗f4 56.e4 ♙e6 was a better way.

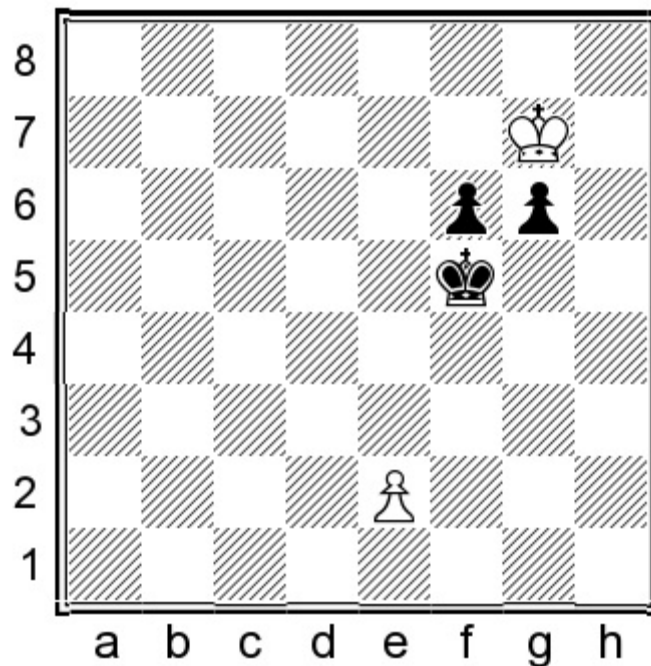
55.♗c6+ ♙f6 56.♙d7 ♗f2



Position after: 56... Nf2

57. ♔d6

The extremely complicated 57.g5+! hxg5 58.hxg5+ ♔xg5 heads towards a draw. 59. ♔e7 f6 60. ♔f7 ♖g4 61. ♖e7 ♖h6+ 62. ♔g7 ♖f5+ 63. ♖xf5 ♔xf5

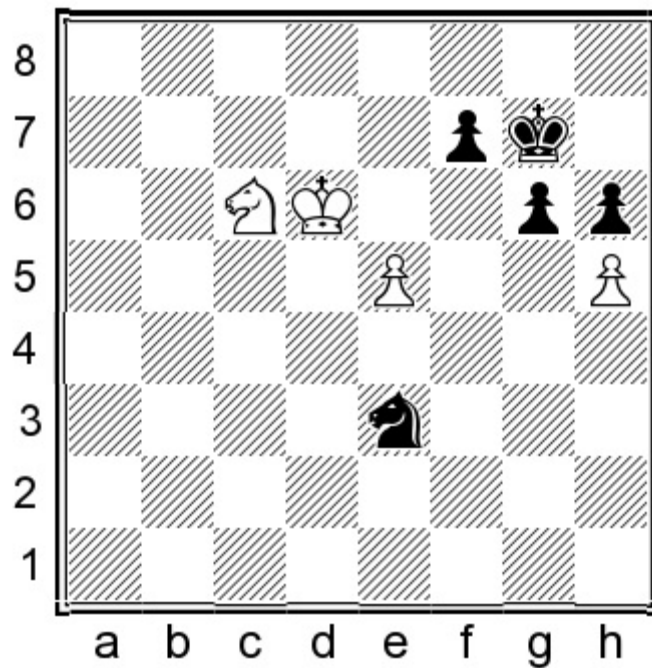


Position after: 63... ♔xf5

[63...gx5 64.e3] 64.e4+!! ♔g5 65. ♔f7 f5 66.e5 f4 67.e6 f3 68.e7 f2 69.e8=♚ f1=♚+ 70. ♔g7 ♚f6+ 71. ♔h7

The resulting queen endgame is a draw.

57...♖xg4 58.e4 ♜e3 59.e5+ ♔g7 60.h5

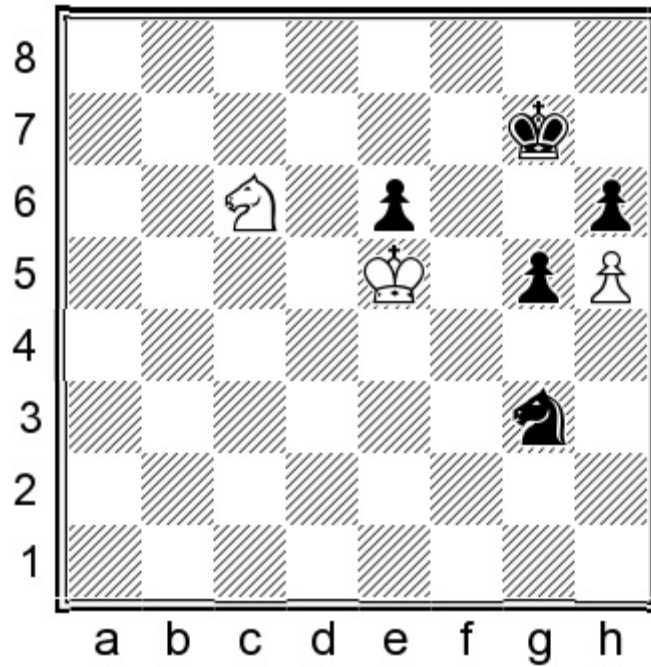


Position after: 60.h5

60...♜f5+?

60...gxh5! was winning.

61.♔d5 g5 62.e6 fxe6+ 63.♔e5 ♜g3

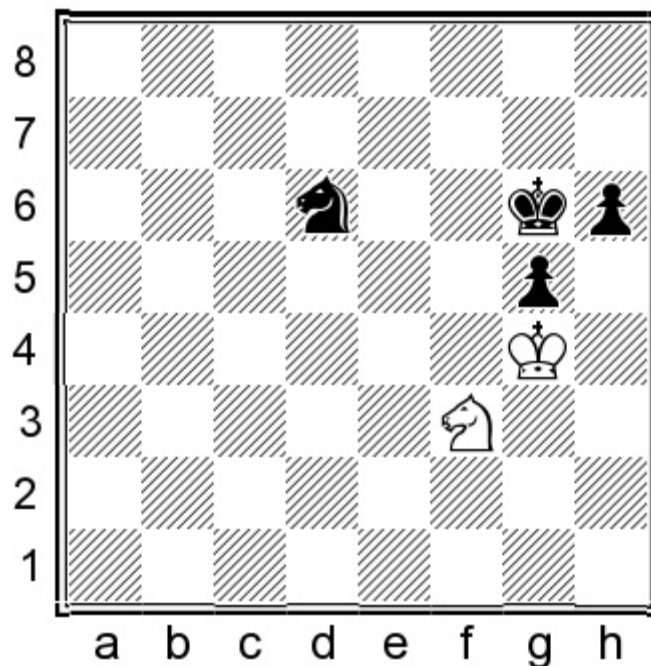


Position after: 63... ♖g3

64. ♘d4?

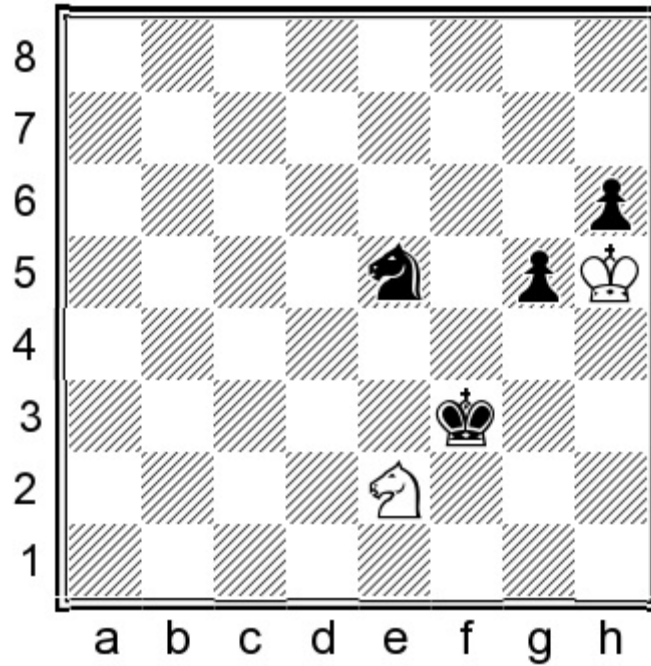
The last mistake after which Saric, despite his great fight, sinks into defeat.

64. ♔xe6! Paradoxically, Black can't win even though he is two pawns up! 64... ♘xh5 65. ♔f5 ♘g3+ 66. ♔g4 ♘e4 67. ♘e5 ♘d6 68. ♘f3 ♔g6



Position after: 68... ♔g6

69. ♖e5+ ♜f6 70. ♜f3 ♜e4 71. ♜h5 ♜g7 72. ♜g4 ♜g6 73. ♜e5+ ♜f6 74. ♜f3 ♜d6 75. ♜h5 ♜f7 76. ♜h2
 ♜f5 77. ♜f3 ♜f4 78. ♜e1 ♜g3 79. ♜c2 ♜f3 80. ♜e1+ ♜f2 81. ♜c2 ♜e5 82. ♜d4 ♜e3 83. ♜f5+ ♜e4
 84. ♜g3+ ♜f4 85. ♜e2+ ♜f3=



Position after: 85... ♜f3=

64... ♜xh5 65. ♜xe6+ ♜g6 66. ♜f8+ ♜f7 67. ♜d7 ♜g3 68. ♜f6 ♜g6 69. ♜d5 h5 70. ♜e7+ ♜f7 71. ♜d5
 h4 72. ♜e3 h3 73. ♜g4 ♜g6 74. ♜h2 ♜h5 75. ♜d4 g4 76. ♜e3 ♜g5

0-1

Chapter 12

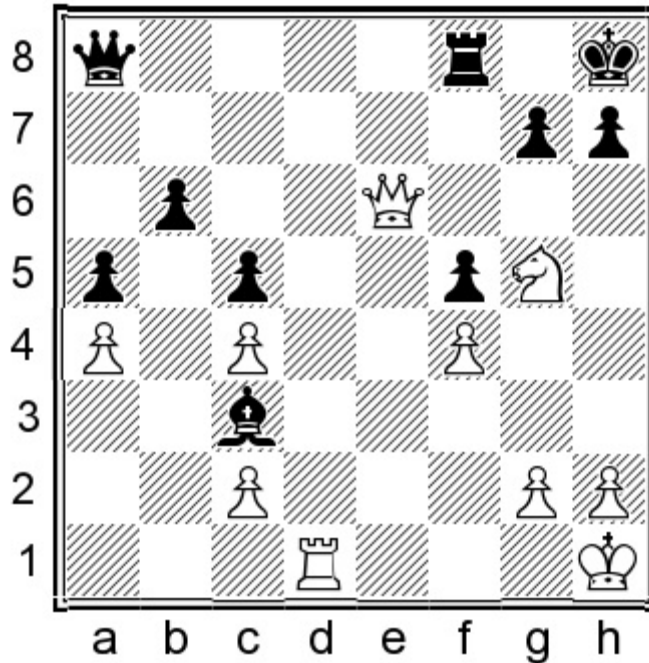
Different tactical motifs

Smothered mate

Example 1

From Abergel – Lazov

Novi Sad 2016



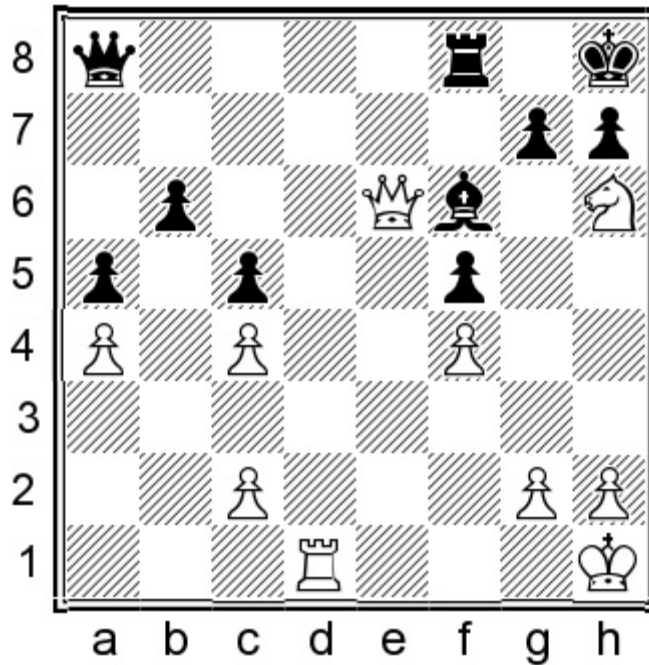
The knight is the most mysterious piece in chess and its unpredictable movement enables it to be a highly dangerous attacking piece. Knowing the motif of a smothered mate will allow you to recognize an offensive setup that is dangerous to your opponent's king.

One of those setups is the one on the board. White threatens the smothered mate motif.

27...♔e8

Therefore Black tries to defend the critical f7-square.

For example the move 27...♘f6 allows White to execute his idea 28.♘f7+! This move probably crosses your mind quickly, but after 28...♔g8 29.♘h6+ ♔h8

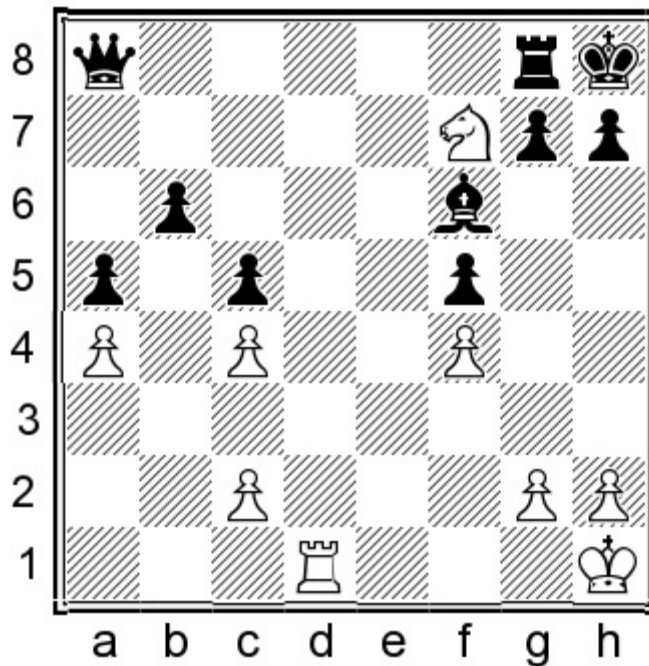


Position after: 29... ♔h8

A) 30. ♖f7+ does White have more than the repetition of moves?

B) He has! The winning move is a queen sacrifice to bury the black king with his own pieces!

30. ♕g8+!! ♖xg8 31. ♖f7#



Position after: 31. ♖f7#

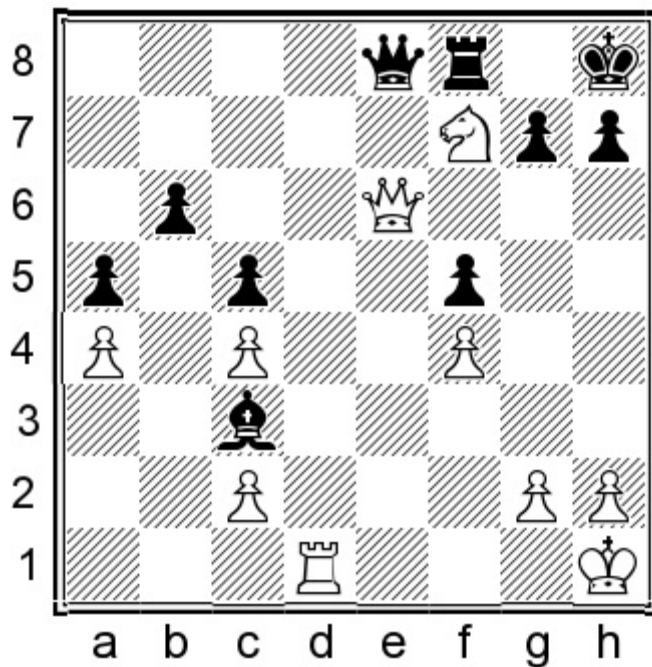
Mate!

Why doesn't the queen sacrifice on g8 cross your mind as a candidate move? Well, simply because you

learned the value of the pieces and the queen is a precious one. However, you should be able to break down those mental barriers in your head. Then you will be prepared to spot special cases where material is not the most important factor, but rather the top priority is time, attack etc. Remember this smothered mate mechanism well, you'll need it!

But White can still play

27...♚e8 28.♘f7+!

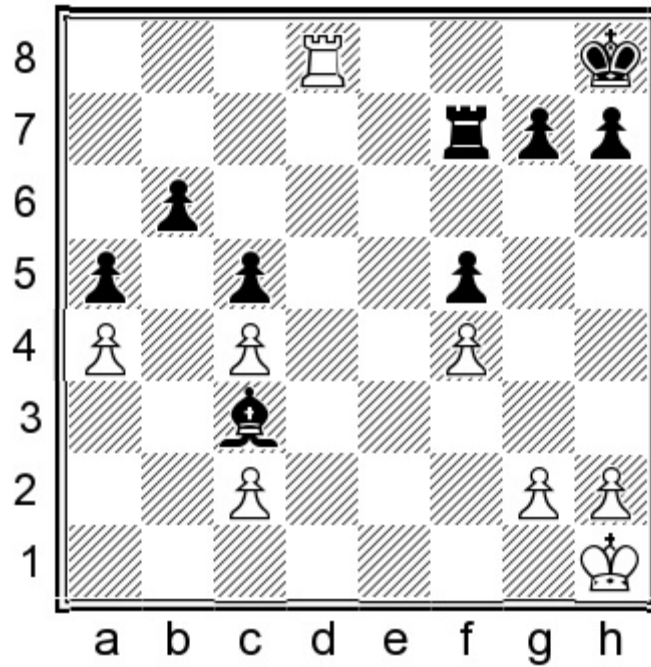


Position after: 28.♘f7+!

since Black can't take the knight because he would get mated.

28...♚g8

28...♚xf7 29.♚xf7 ♜xf7 30.♞d8+!

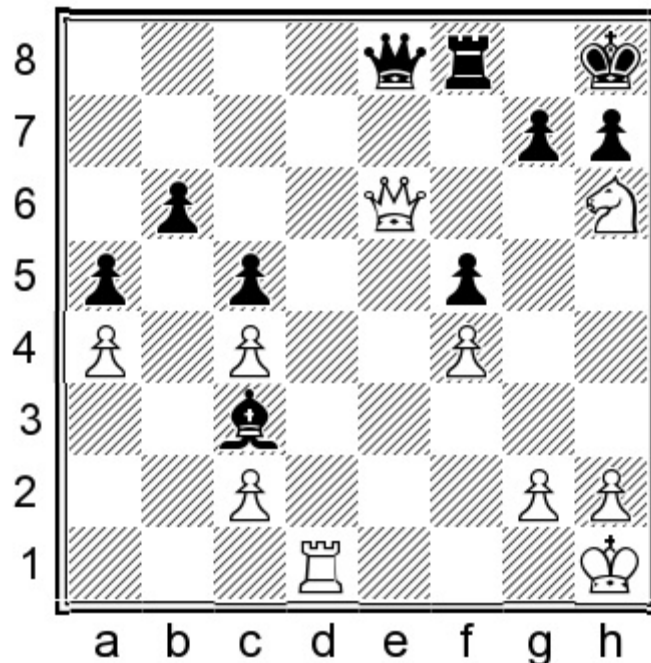


Position after: 30. ♖d8+!

The motif of back-rank weakness decides the issue.

It is also important that you believe in yourself when making a tactical calculation. For example, your opponent does not allow you to make some move, but you see one move further and you just play it! This will have a terribly unpleasant effect on your opponent as this move will come as a shock to him.

29. ♖h6+ ♔h8



Position after: 29... ♔h8

The f7 square is now defended and there is no smothered mate. Or is that not the case?

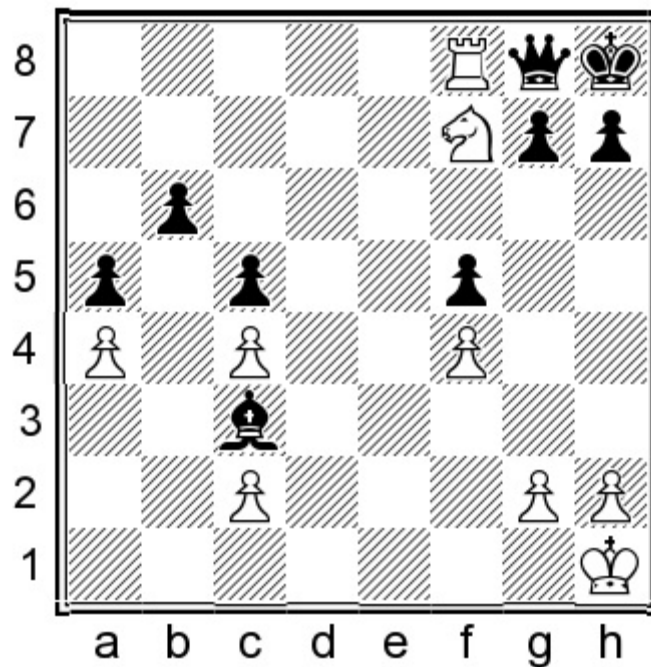
30. ♖d8!!

The black queen keeps the f7-square under control. But something big is at stake (a mate) so you shouldn't be materialistic, be prepared for sacrifices!

30. ♕g8+?? ♖xg8 31. ♘f7+ ♕xf7! and there is no mate.

30... ♕xd8

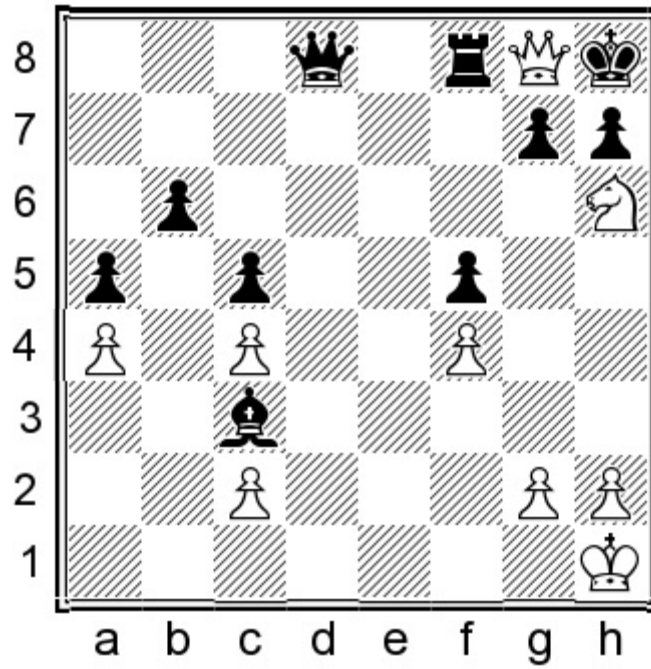
Taking the queen also leads to mate after 30... ♕xe6 31. ♖xf8+ ♕g8 32. ♖xg8# [or an even prettier one 32. ♘f7#!].



Position after: 32. ♘f7#!

Now the preconditions for the smothered mate mechanism you've already learned have emerged.

31. ♕g8+!!



Position after: 31. ♔g8+!!

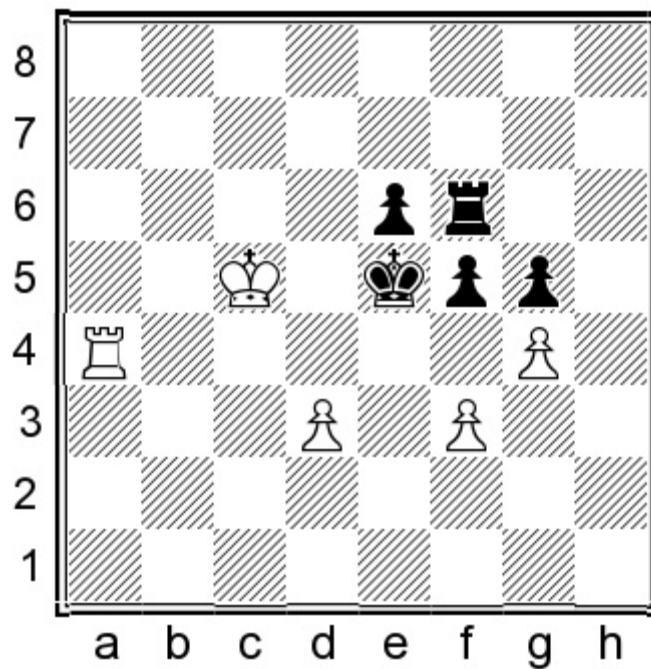
31... ♜xg8 32. ♘f7#

Mate!

1-0

Example 2

Study by E. Pogosyants, 1963

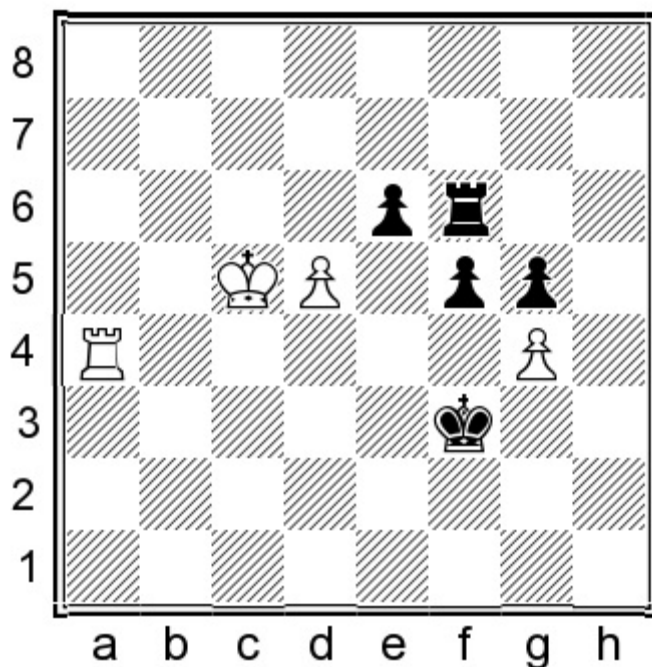


The smothered mate is not only reserved for the knight; there are other types of smothered mate, such as this one. It is important that you recognize this possibility and that you are not “a slave of the material”!

In this particular position it somehow feels that the black king is too exposed, also that the position of the black rook on f6 and the king on e5 are somehow unnatural. In the case of 1.d4 check the black king will have to move to the fourth rank, where the white rook rules...

1.f4+!!

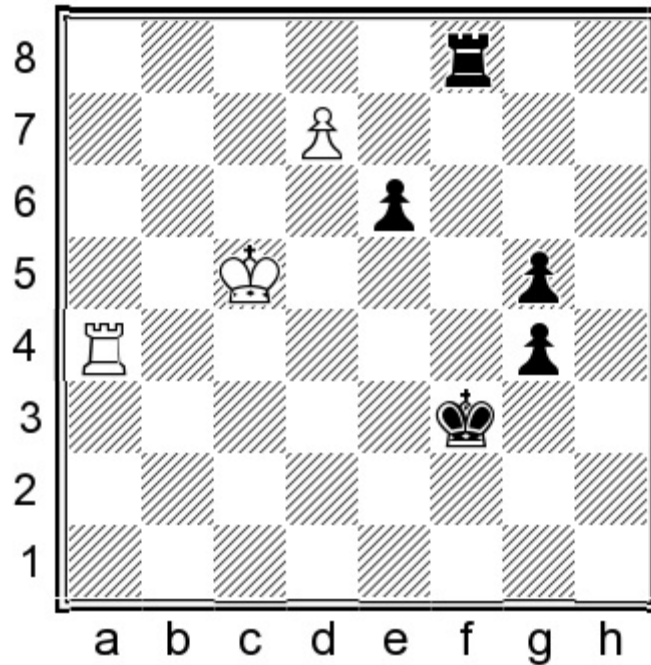
Unfortunately for White the move 1.d4+ leads nowhere after 1...♔f4 2.d5+ ♕xf3



Position after: 2...♕xf3

Now White has a choice, however he must be very careful not to lose the game.

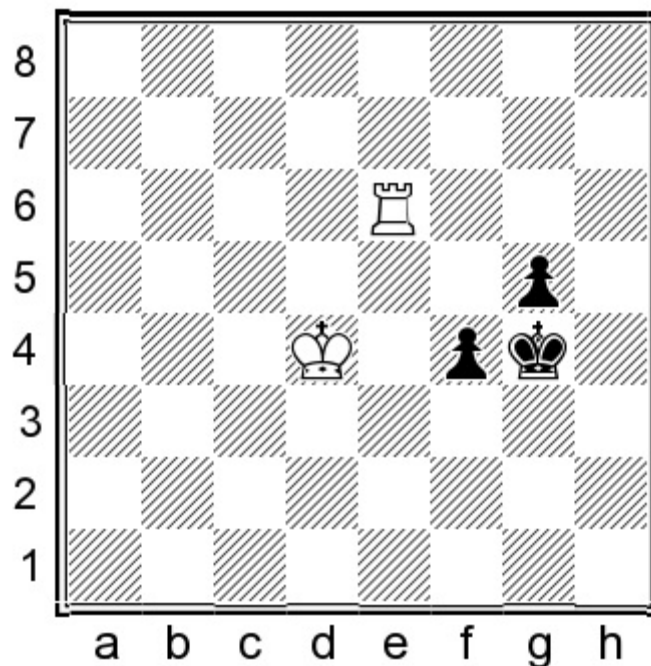
A) 3.d6 is dangerous for White because after 3...fxg4 4.d7 ♖f8



Position after: 4...Rf8

Black is ready to sacrifice his rook for White's dangerous passed pawn, after which White's king will be too far from the action and the white rook alone will not be able to fight against the black king and pawns. 5.♔d6 g3 6.♔e7 ♖h8 7.d8=♚ ♖xd8 8.♔xd8 g2 9.♖a1 e5 10.♔e7 e4 11.♔f6 e3 12.♔xg5 e2 13.♔h4 ♔f2 14.♔h3 g1=♚ 15.♖xg1 ♔xg1 And White is too late. 16.♔g3 e1=♚+

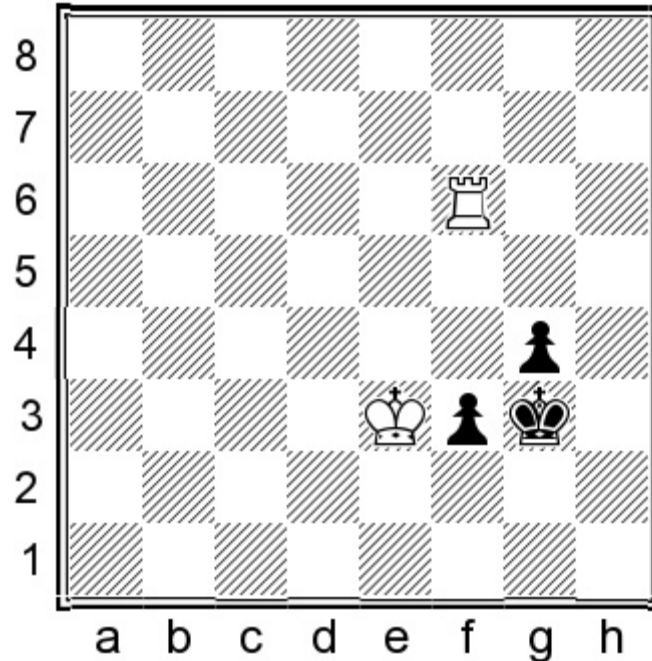
B) 3.♖a6 The idea is to tie down the black rook for a time because pushing the white d-pawn is not good. 3...♔xg4 4.dxe6 [4.♖xe6 ♖f8 will end up similar to the 3.d6 line] 4...♖xe6 The continuation below is not forced, but I want to show you the power of the black pawns! 5.♖xe6 f4 6.♔d4



Position after: 6. ♔d4

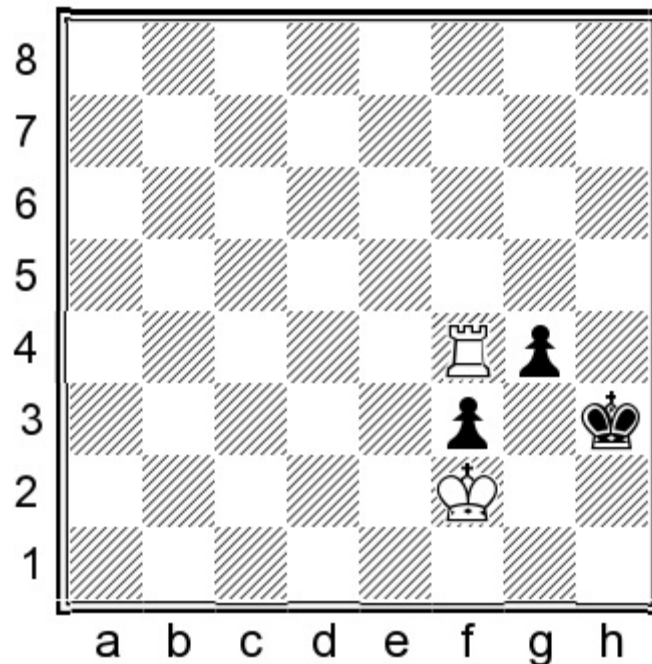
Now comes an important moment, a very instructive one. If White's king were in front of the black pawns, he would win easily. So Black must prevent that.

B1) The white king and rook are fighting with the pawns if Black plays 6...f3 7. ♔e3 ♔g3 8. ♖f6 g4.



Position after: 8...g4

Now the key move is 9. ♖f4!. This move puts the black pawns under complete control. The important question is, what will Black play next? 9...♔h3 [9...♔g2 10. ♖xg4+ ♔f1 11. ♔xf3 is an easy win 11...♔e1 12. ♖d4! ♔f1 13. ♖d1#; 9...f2 10. ♖xf2] 10. ♔f2

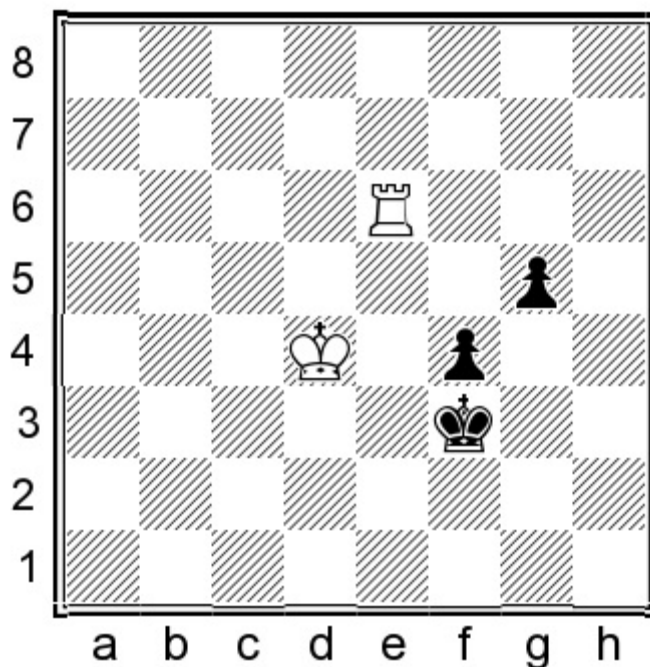


Position after: 10. ♔f2

B1.1) 10...g3+ 11. ♔xf3 g2 12. ♖g4 ♔h2 13. ♖xg2+ ♔h1 14. ♖a2 ♔g1 15. ♖b2 ♔h1 [15...♔f1 16. ♖b1#] 16. ♔g3 ♔g1 17. ♖b1#

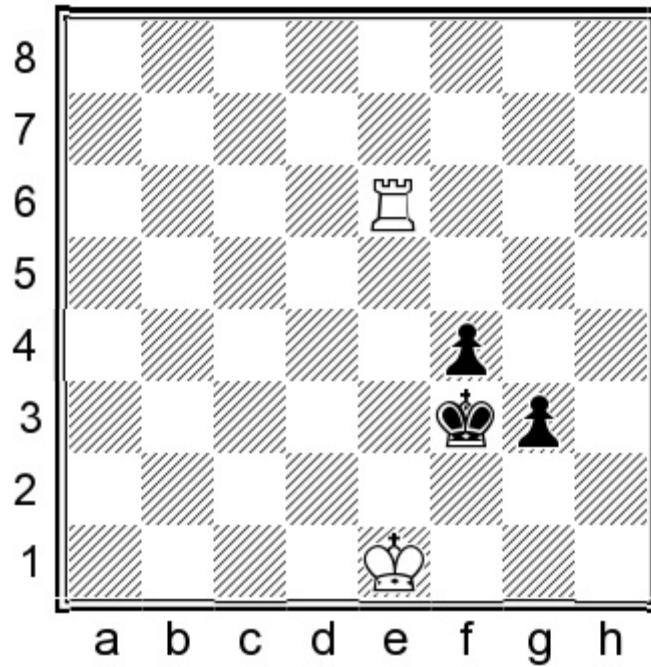
B1.2) 10...♔h4 Black tries to save his pawns, but now follows 11. ♖f5!! g3+ [11...♔h3 12. ♖h5# mate!] 12. ♔xf3 and the pawns are falling.

B2) 6...♔f3!! This technique is called “shouldering”.



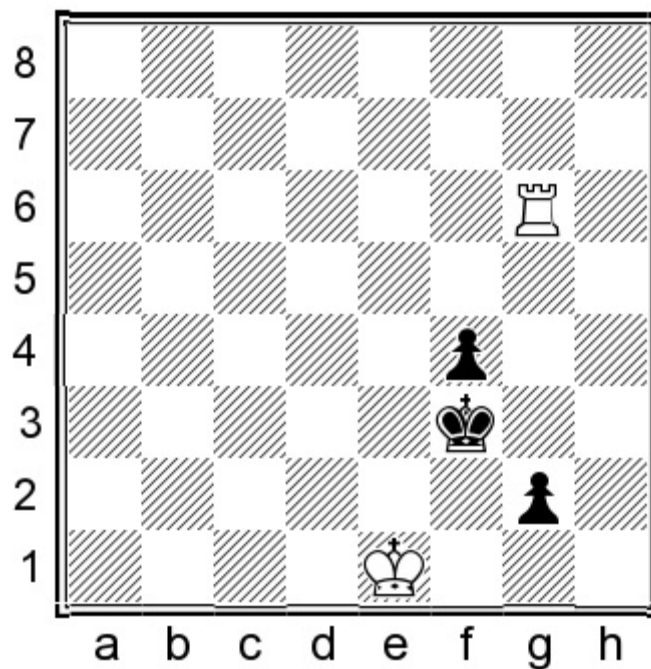
Position after: 6... ♔f3!!

The goal is to allow you to push your pedestrians, but at the same time to block the path of the opponent's king! 7. ♔d3 g4 8. ♔d2 g3 9. ♔e1



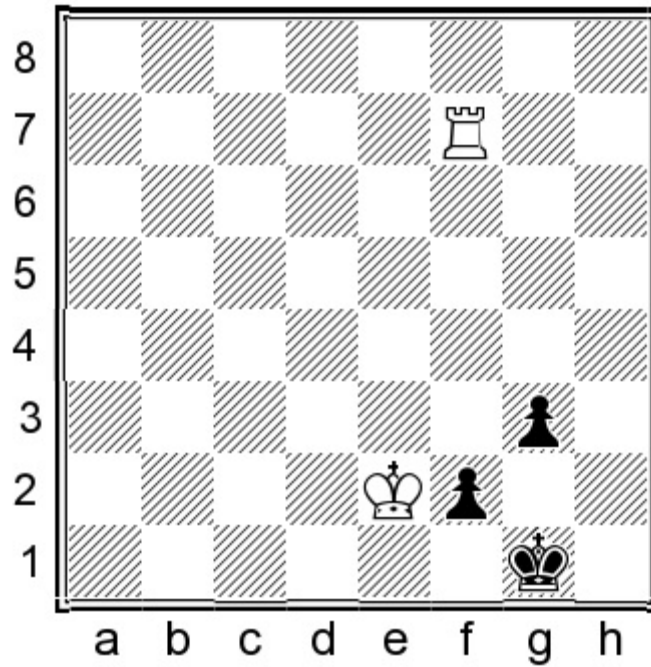
Position after: 9. ♔e1

9... ♔g2 Again shouldering! [9...g2?? is a big blunder due to 10. ♖g6!



Position after: 10. ♖g6!

and the black king must separate himself from the defense of his pawns] 10. ♖f6 f3 11. ♖f8 f2+ 12. ♔e2 ♔g1 13. ♖f7

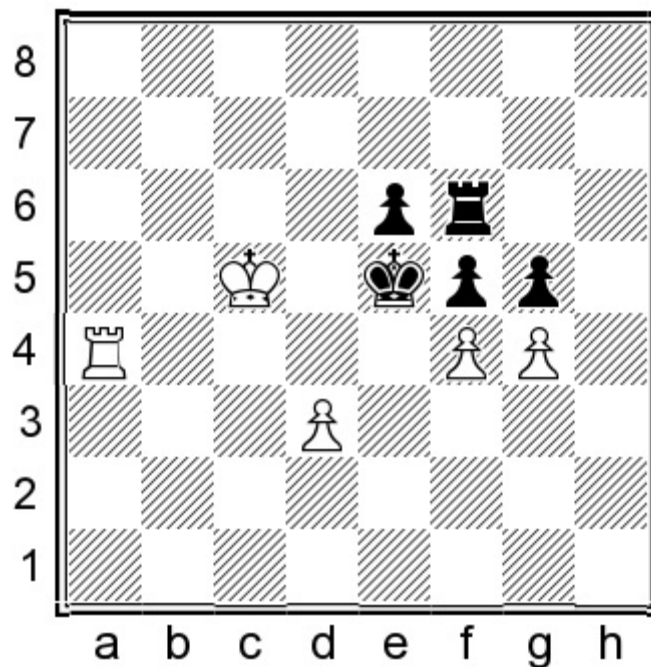


Position after: 13. Rf7

13... Kg2 [or 13... g2 14. Rxf2 Kh1 15. Rg2 with a draw] 14. Rf8 With a perpetual.

The move 1.d4+ allows the black king to escape through the f4-square. So White, at the cost of one of his pawns, takes away this opportunity with the 1.f4+ idea!

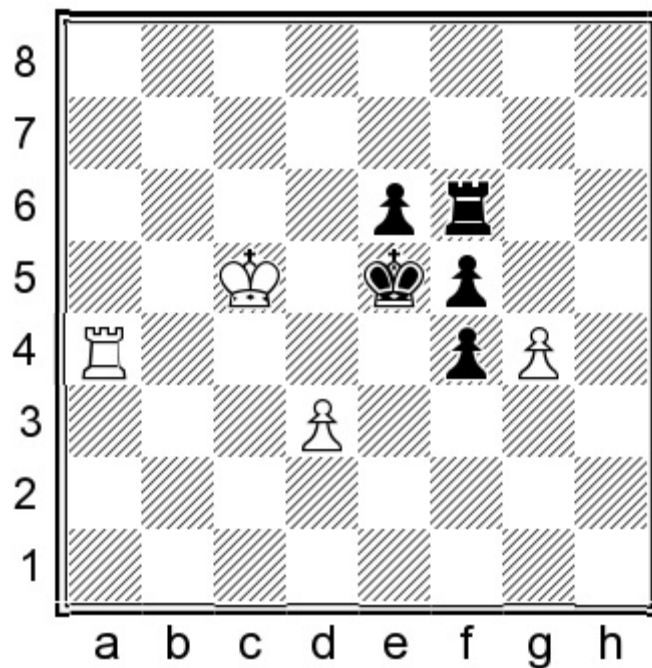
1.f4+!!



Position after: 1.f4+!!

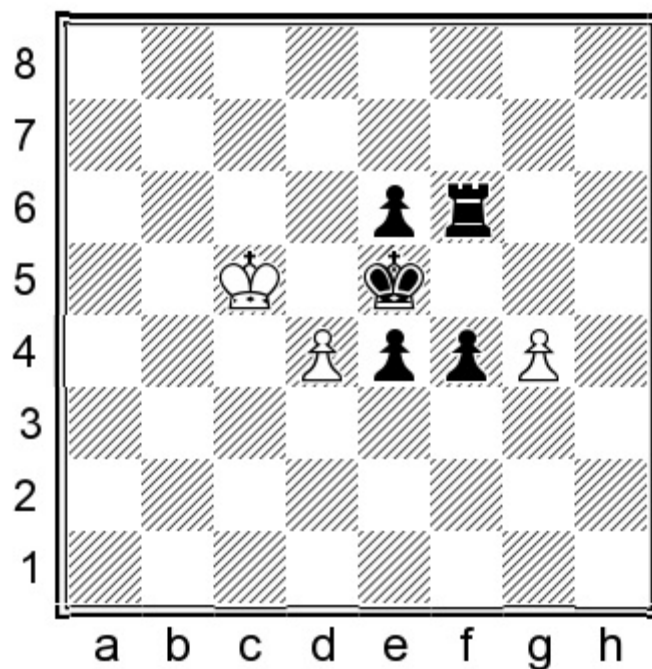
1...gxf4

But when the white pawn was alive on the f3-square, it was controlling the e4-square, a possible escape route for the black king. The solution is to take away that opportunity too!



Position after: 1...gxf4

2.♖e4+!! fxe4 3.d4#

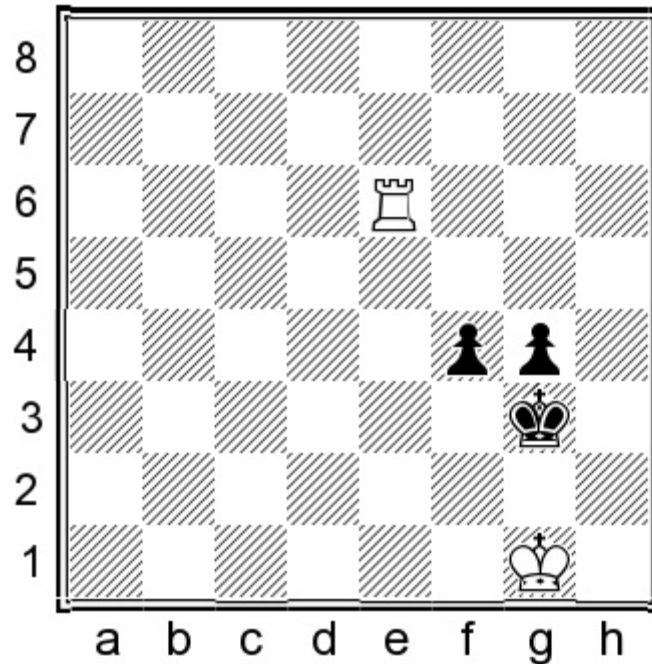


Position after: 3.d4#

Mate!

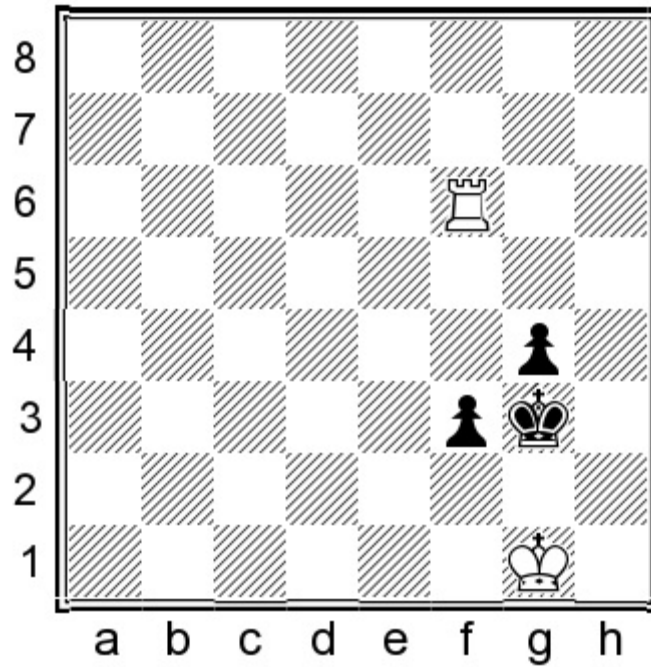
1-0

Example 3
Rook versus two pawns



The king in front of the pawns easily leads to victory for the side with a rook. Even if Black has three pawns (of course, so long as they have not advanced too far) White would not be in real danger. Black would be the one who would need to think about making a draw.

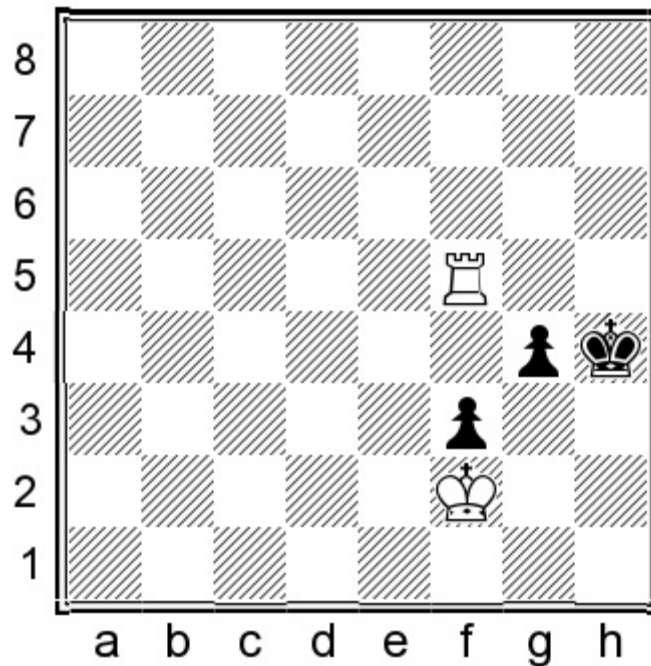
1...f3 2.♖f6!



Position after: 2. ♖f6!

For White other moves win as well, but this method is best one to remember. The rook should go behind the more advanced pawn and then later the king stands in front of that pawn to block it.

2...♔h3 3.♔f2 ♔h4 4.♖f5!

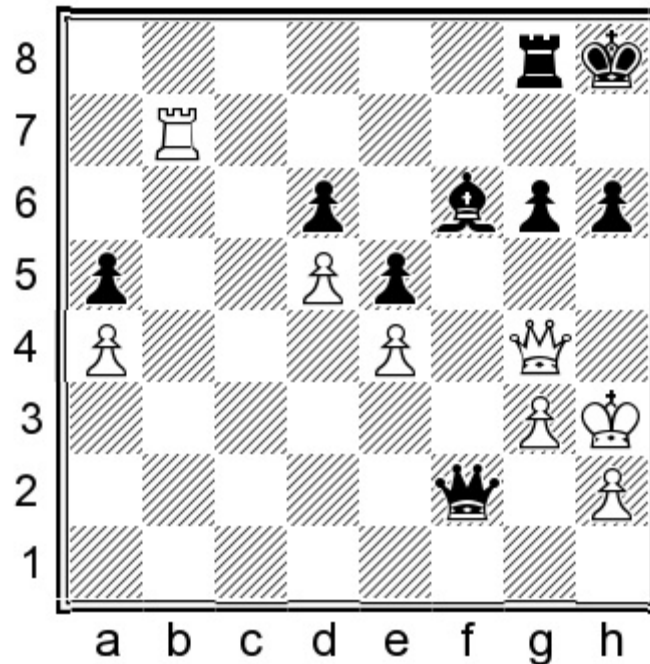


Position after: 4. ♖f5!

The pawns are falling!

Stalemate**Example 4**

White to move draws



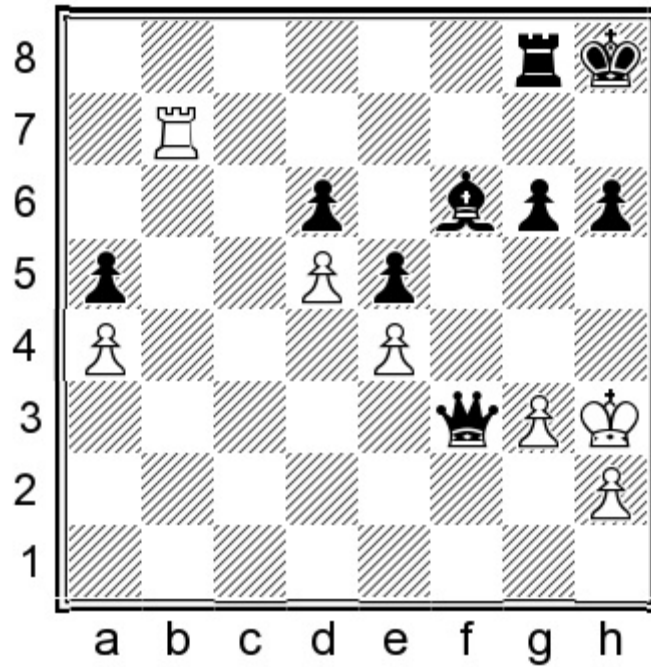
For the weaker side a stalemate is often the only way out of a losing position. The weaker side, desperately trying to save the game, seeks all available options and is somehow more prepared for unexpected solutions. The stronger side, on the other hand, is preoccupied with the desire to win material and does not see what his opponent is heading for. Also, sometimes stalemate happens even on a board full of pieces, as the stronger side tends to forget that if the pawns are blocked it's the same as if they don't exist.

This position hides a fantastic saving solution for White who, in addition to having less material, faces the threat of mate!

1. ♔f3!!

Only after the move played by White does Black become aware that a draw is inevitable. White defends the check at f1 while also is attacking both the black queen and the bishop.

1... ♖xf3



Position after: 1... ♔xf3

Now that the black queen has come to the f3-square, the white king can no longer move because the pawn on g3 is pinned by the queen. Which means that it remains for White only to sacrifice his last piece, the rook!

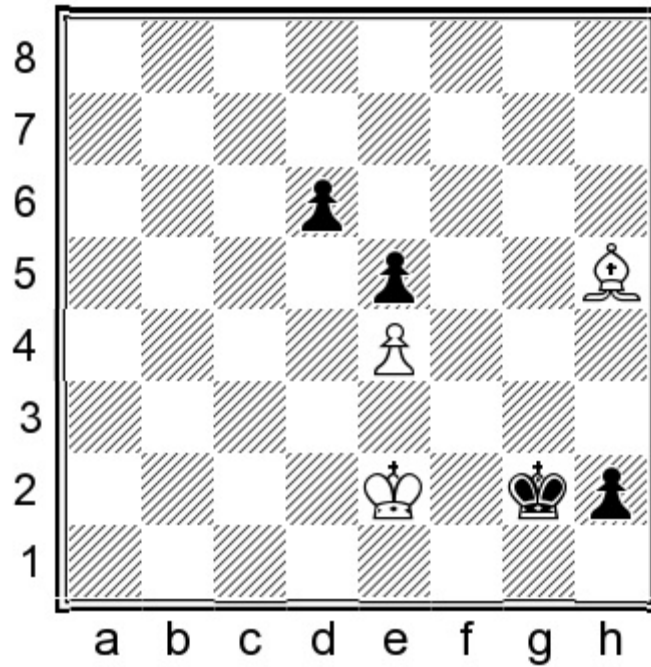
2. ♖h7+ ♔xh7

Stalemate!

1/2-1/2

Example 5

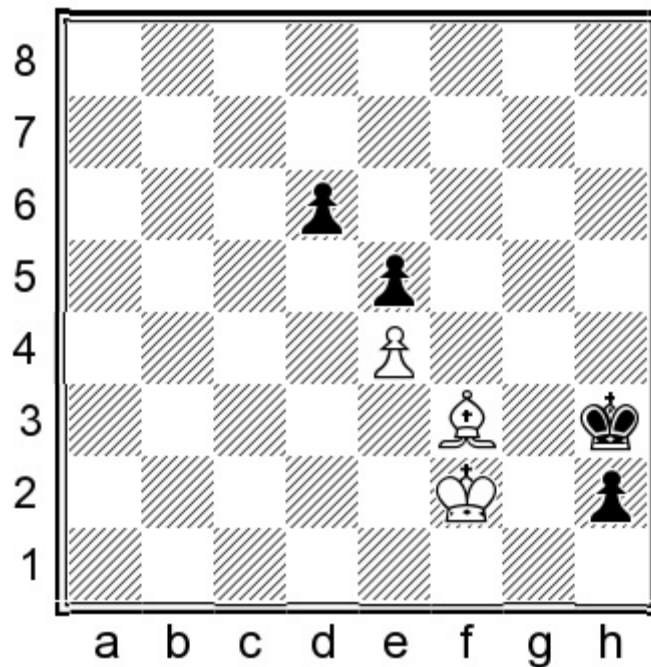
Study by E. Del Rio, 1750



A stalemate doesn't need to be just a defensive motif; it can also be a very powerful attacking idea, like in this example.

1. ♖f3+ ♔g1

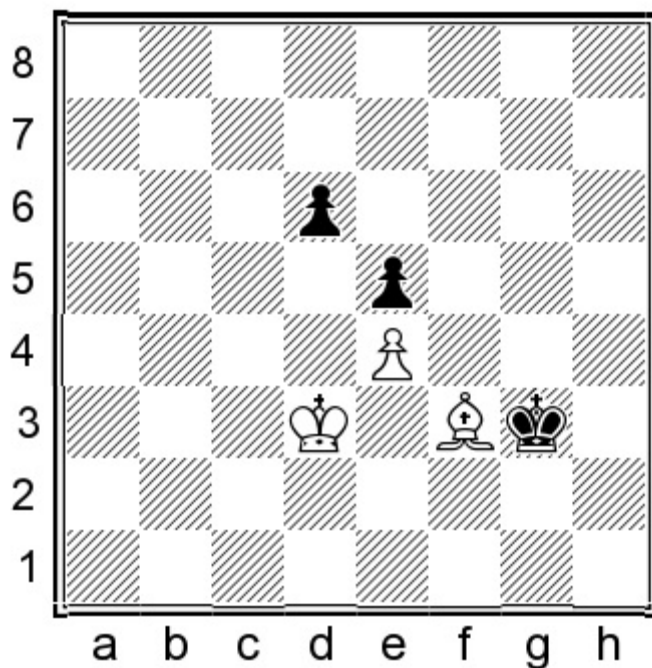
It's no fun for Black to wait since White has a way of pushing the black king away. 1... ♖g3 2. ♕e3 ♖h3 3. ♕f2



Position after: 3. ♕f2

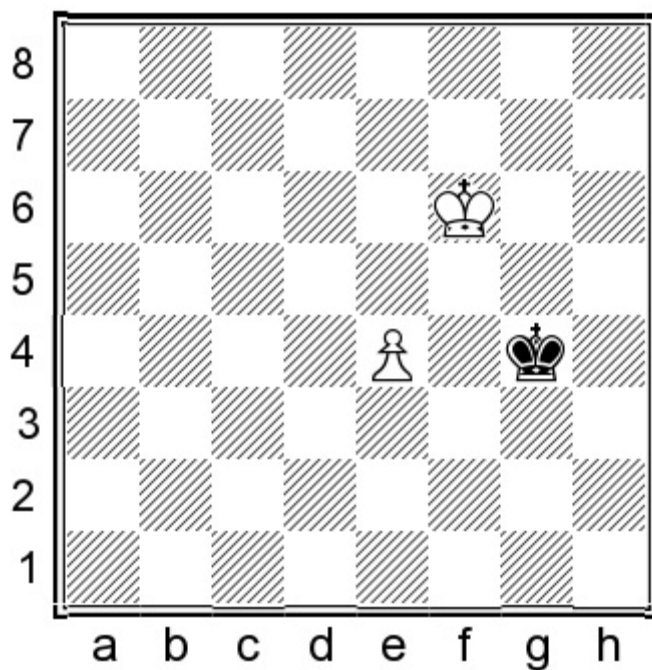
3... ♖h4 4. ♕g2 h1=♚+ 5. ♕xh1 ♖g3 6. ♖g2 ♖f4 7. ♖h2 ♖g4 8. ♕g1 ♖g3 9. ♕f1 ♖f4 10. ♕f2 ♖g4

11.♔e3 ♖g3 12.♙f3 ♗h4 13.♕d3 ♖g3



Position after: 13...♖g3

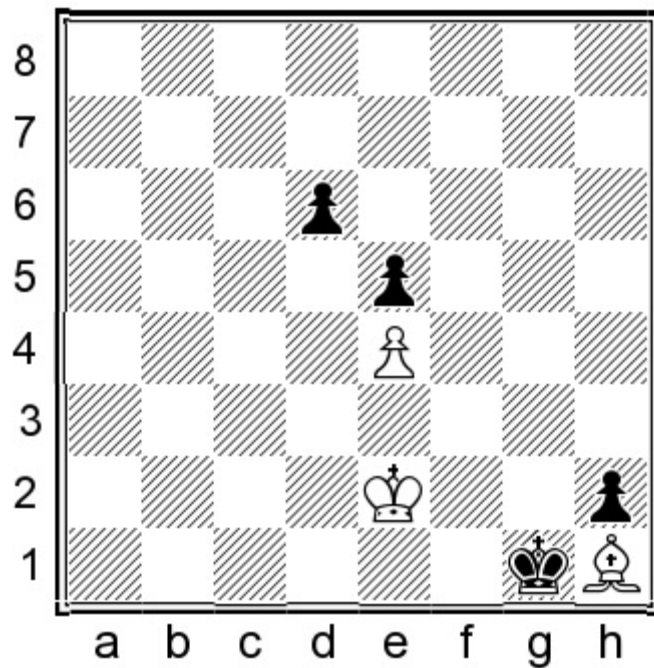
14.♙h1! and White is now very quick in the race. Transformation of the advantage! 14...♗h2 15.♕c4 ♕xh1 16.♕d5 ♖g2 17.♕xd6 ♗f3 18.♕xe5 ♖g4 19.♕f6



Position after: 19.♕f6

And the pawn queens easily.

2.♔h1!!

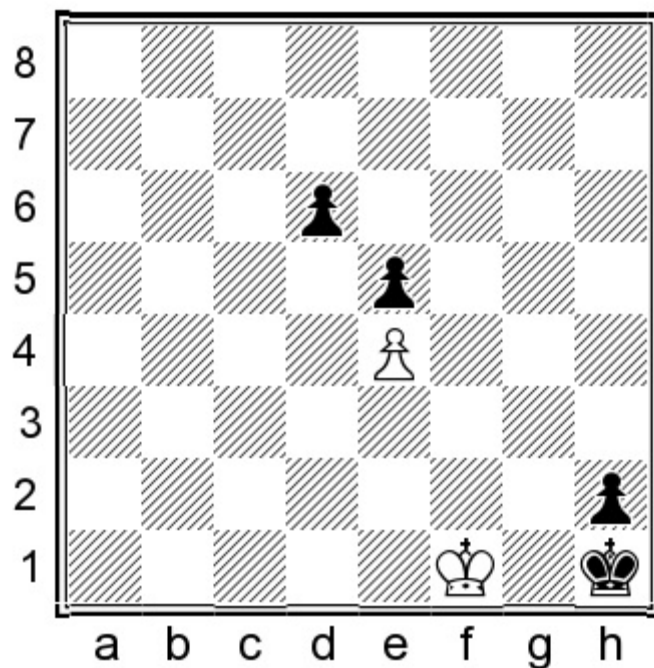


Position after: 2.♔h1!!

Stalemate motif in the attack!

Now White is one move short after 2.♔d3 h1=♚ 3.♔xh1 ♔xh1 4.♔c4 ♔g2 5.♔d5 ♔f3 6.♔xd6 ♔xe4.

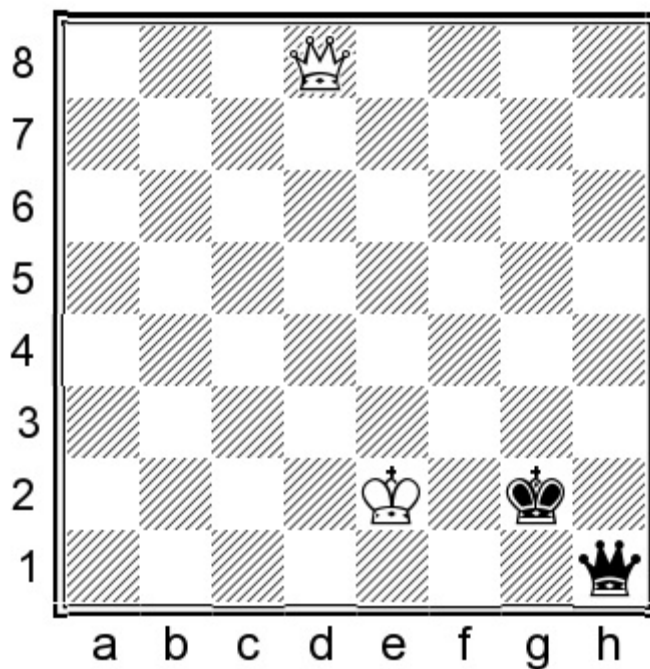
2...♔xh1 3.♔f1!



Position after: 3.♔f1!

The black king is in stalemate, so Black has no choice but to move his c-pawn, which is perfectly what White wants!

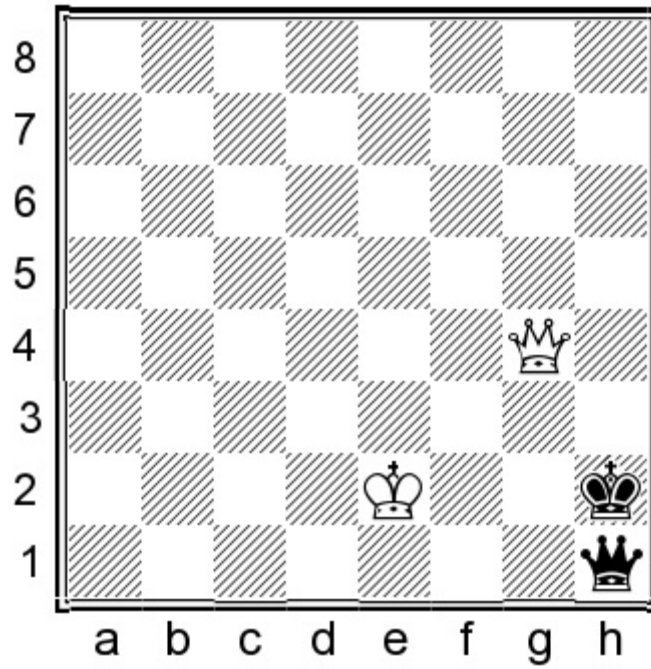
3...d5 4.exd5 e4 5.d6 e3 6.d7 e2+ 7.♔xe2 ♔g2 8.d8=♚ h1=♚



Position after: 8...h1=♚

It looks like the game will end up in a draw since both players have queened their pawns, but White can build a mating net in this queen endgame without the pawns!

9.♚g5+ ♔h3 10.♚h5+ ♔g2 11.♚g4+ ♔h2



Position after: 11...♔h2

12.♔f2!

And there is no way for Black to avoid the mate!

12...♚c1 13.♚g2#

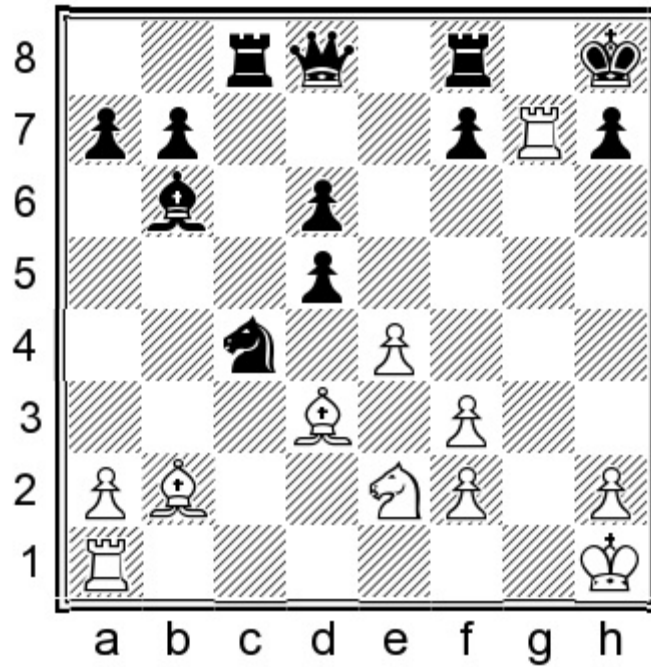
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Windmill

Example 6

From Anderssen – Suhle

Breslau 1859

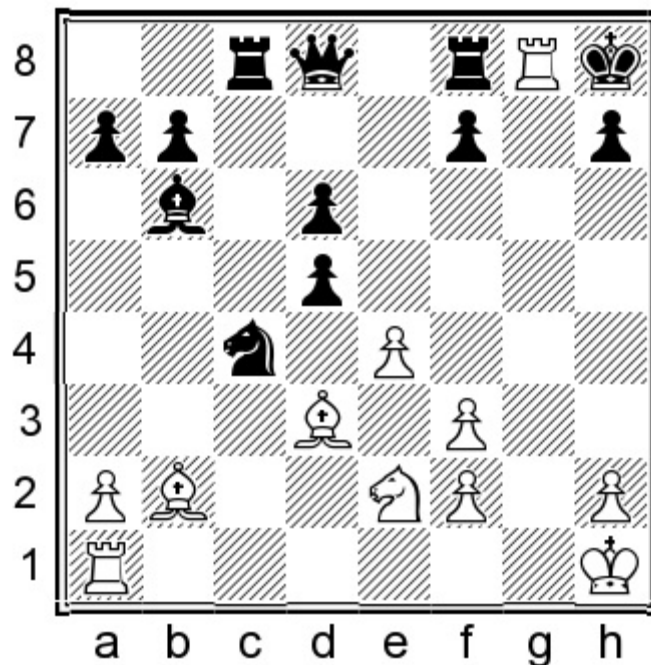


Position after: 20...♔h8

21.♖g8+!!

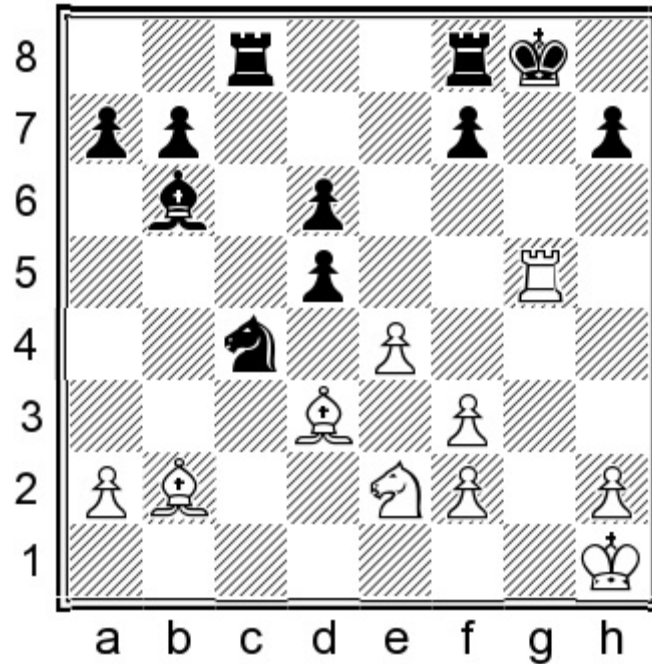
The rook sacrifice is cleaning the way for the arrival of the other rook!

If the black knight did not attack the white b2-bishop, a windmill would be set up and White would win. 21.♖xf7+ ♔g8 [but here Black simply removes the bishop and wins with 21...♞xb2] 22.♖g7+ ♔h8 23.♖xb7+ ♔g8 24.♖g1+



Position after: 21.♖g8+!!

21...♔xg8 22.♖g1+ ♔g5 23.♖xg5#



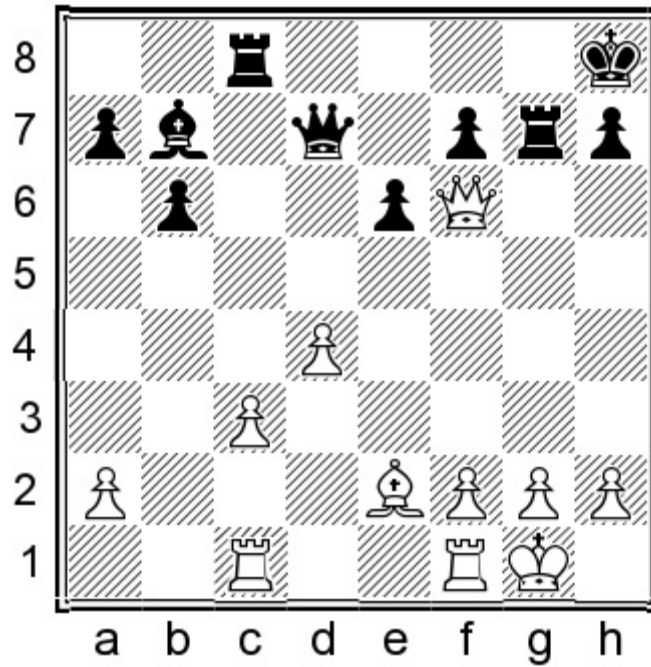
Position after: 23.♖xg5#

In general, it is important that you remember the duo of rook and bishop, which can work brilliantly together (another strong tandem is queen and knight).

1-0

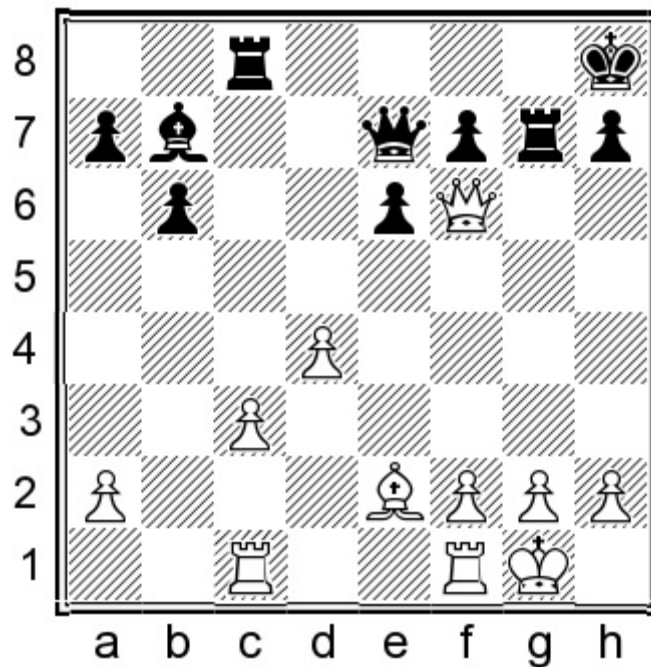
Example 7

From Szelag – B. Socko
Germany 2015



When you are familiar with the previous example, it will be easier for you to see how grandmaster Socko in this position created a great queen sacrifice!

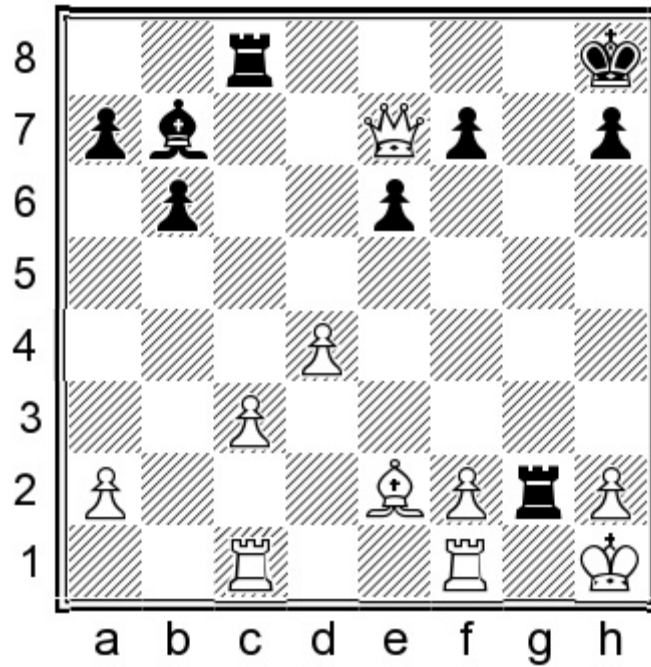
20...♙e7!!



Position after: 20...♙e7!!

Distracting the white queen at the price of Black's most valuable piece, but it's always an option when there's something bigger in the game, and that's a mate!

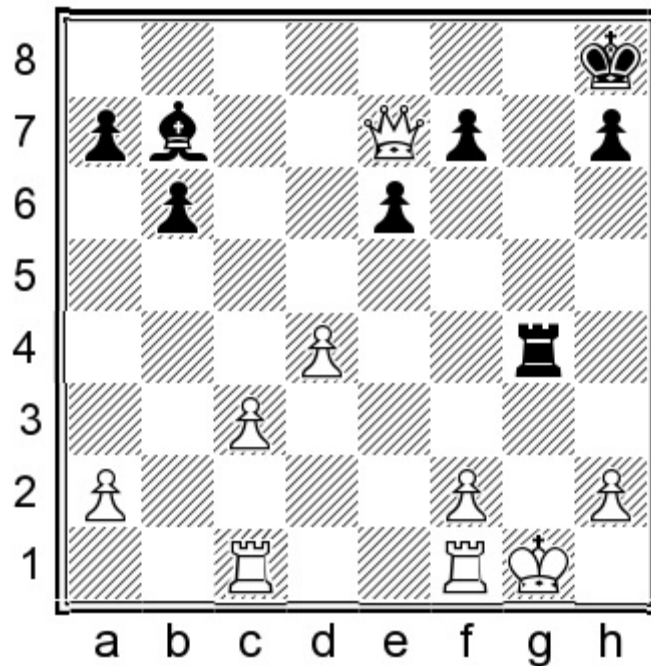
21.♙xe7 ♖xg2+ 22.♔h1



Position after: 22. ♔h1

Again, Black does not have the possibility of setting up a real windmill, but you know from the previous example that there is a win.

22... ♖g1+!! 23. ♕xg1 ♖g8+ 24. ♗g4 ♖xg4#



Position after: 24... ♖xg4#

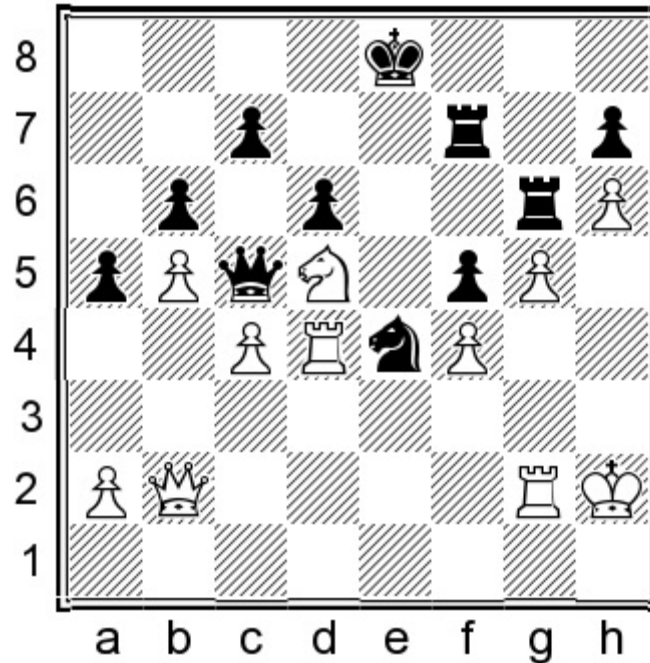
Mate!

Trapping the queen

Example 8

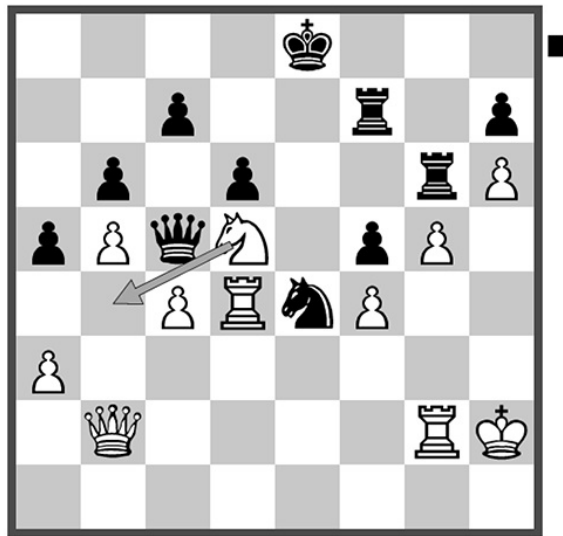
Analysis from Bruzon Batista – Vidity

Baku 2015



Since the queen is the most valuable piece, her capture has always had a special price. Countless miniatures in the opening ended with “damenfang” (queen trap) due to the greed of the opposite side who sent their queen out on a raid to grab material. But even in the middlegame there are motifs for catching the queen. One of them is this, the black queen is restricted in movement, but how to catch it? The answer is a fantastic move.

42.a3!!



Position after: 42.a3!!

And on any move by Black, such as for example

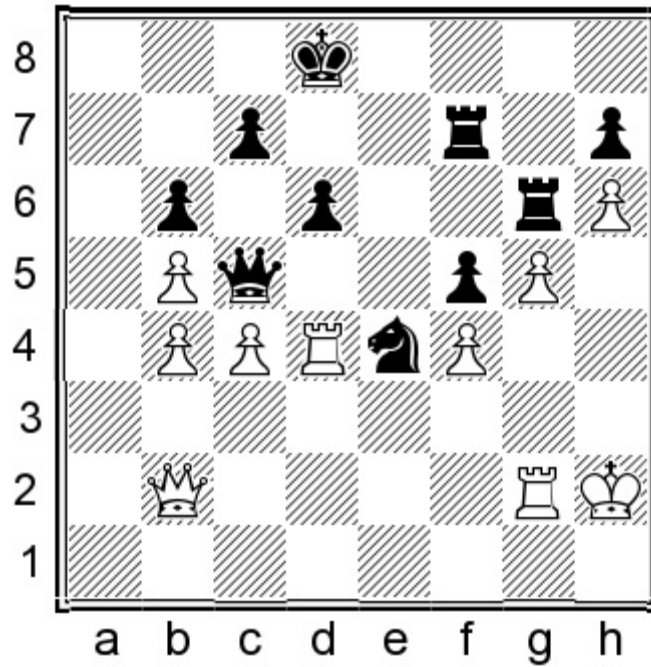
42...♔d8

White plays

43.♘b4!!

and the queen is doomed since White threatens ♘d3 or ♘a6, which Black cannot prevent. After the capture

43...axb4 44.axb4



Position after: 44.axb4

the queen is lost.

44...♙xd4 45.♔xd4

And White wins easily.

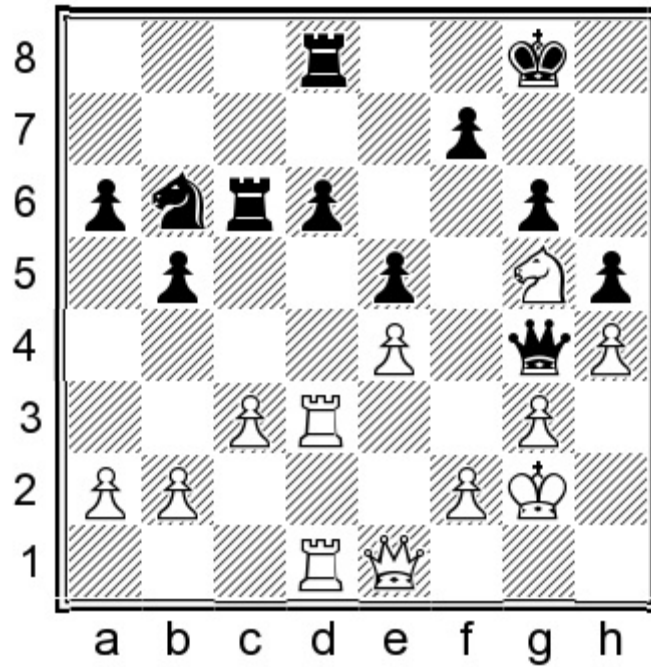
1-0

Example 9

From Polgar – Yilmaz

Yerevan 2014

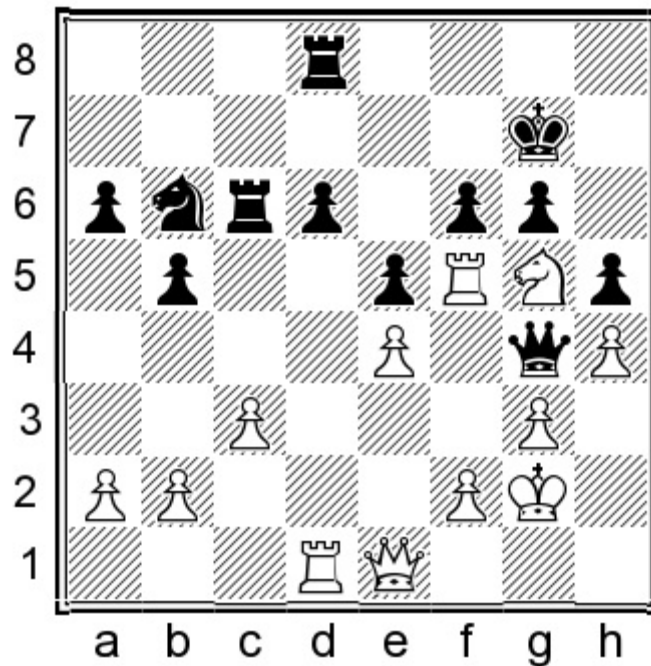
The famous Judit Polgar spotted a similar motif in this game and after the mistake



27...♔g7?

by her opponent, who had no idea what was coming and was met with a very cold shower in the form of

28.♖f3 f6 29.♖f5!!



Position after: 29.♖f5!!

And all of a sudden the black queen is trapped!

29...fxg5 30.f3! ♖xf5 31.exf5 gx5 32.♖e3 f4 33.♖e4

And Black resigned.

1-0

Blockade

Example 10

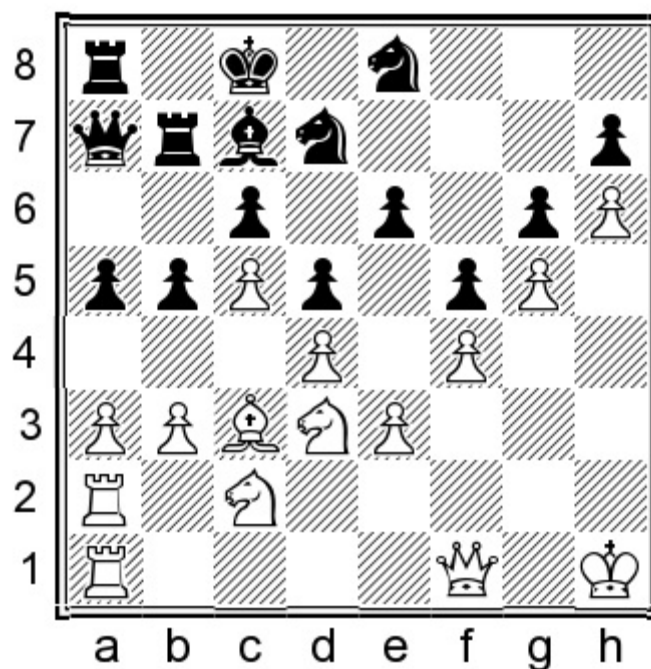
Kozul – Tukmakov

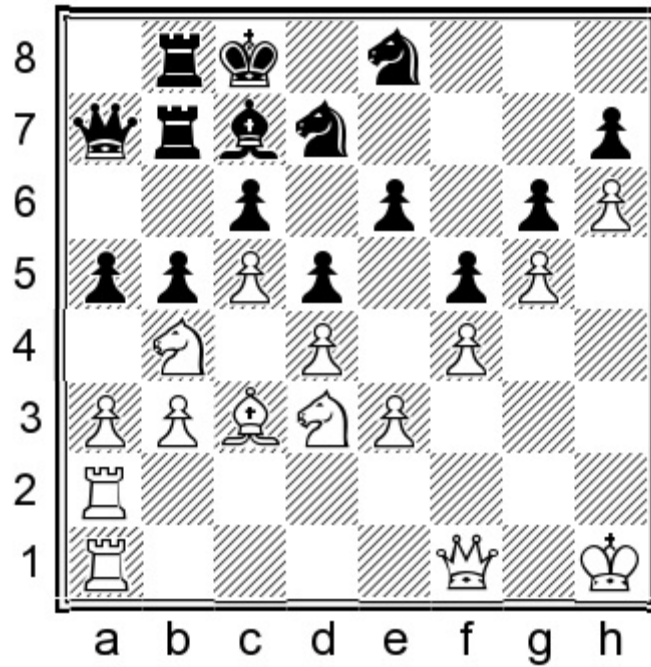
Yerevan 2014

The following game is an example of the struggle for blockade and unblocking, so I will not intentionally shorten it up for you.

Go through the maneuvering and get to the point where former European Champion Zdenko Kozul catches his experienced opponent on the wrong foot!

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 a6 5.♙d3 b5 6.b3 ♙g4 7.♘ge2 ♙h5 8.♙d2 ♙g6 9.♘f4 ♙xd3 10.♘xd3 e6 11.♖f3 ♙e7 12.c5 a5 13.g4 0-0 14.g5 ♘e8 15.h4 ♘d7 16.♖g3 ♖c7 17.f4 f5 18.h5 ♖b7 19.h6 g6 20.♖g2 ♘c7 21.0-0 ♖a7 22.♖fc1 ♖b8 23.♙h1 ♖a6 24.♖f1 ♖b7 25.♘e2 ♖a8 26.a3 ♙d8 27.♘g1 ♘e8 28.♖ab1 ♙c7 29.♘f3 ♖bb7 30.♖b2 ♖b8 31.♙c3 ♖bb7 32.♖h3 ♖b8 33.♖e1 ♘f8 34.♖be2 ♖b7 35.♙a1 ♖c8 36.♖g2 ♖bb7 37.♙g1 ♙b8 38.♘d2 ♖f7 39.♙c3 ♖a6 40.♘f2 ♖c8 41.♙a1 ♖d8 42.♘d3 ♖ab7 43.♖f2 ♙c7 44.♘f3 ♘d7 45.♖ff1 ♖a8 46.♖b2 ♙f8 47.♖e2 ♖d8 48.♖fe1 ♙b8 49.♙h1 ♖a7 50.♘d2 ♙e7 51.♖c2 ♘f8 52.♙c3 ♙c7 53.♘b1 ♖a8 54.♙b2 ♙d8 55.♘c3 ♙c8 56.♘f2 ♙b8 57.♙c1 ♖b7 58.♙d2 ♖a8 59.♖a1 ♖a7 60.♙e1 ♖b7 61.♖d3 ♖a6 62.♖b2 ♙c7 63.♖f1 ♙d8 64.♘d3 ♘d7 65.♘e2 ♖a7 66.♘g1 ♖b8 67.♘f3 ♙c7 68.♙c3 ♖aa7 69.♖ba2 ♖a8 70.♘fe1 ♖a7 71.♘c2





Position after: 72. ♘cb4!!

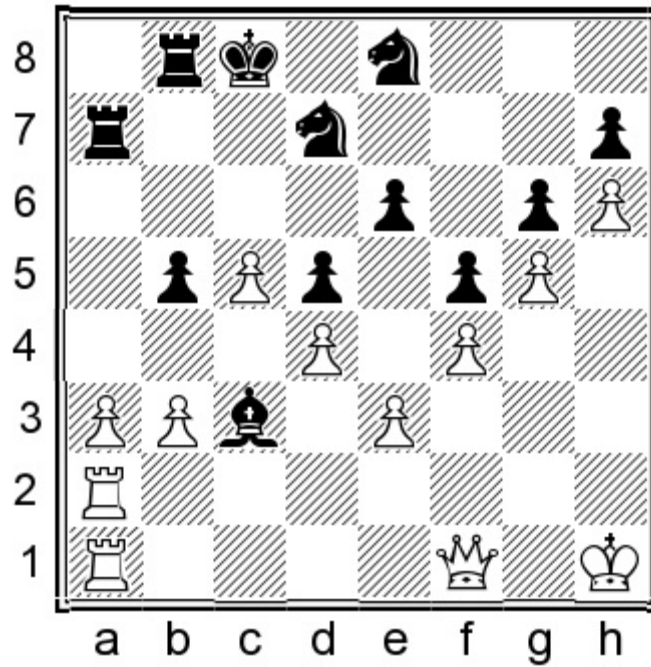
A strike out of the blue! White sacrifices his knight for only one pawn, but due to the awkward position of the black pieces another pawn falls.

72...axb4 73. ♘xb4

Suddenly the c-pawn falls as well.

However, 73...axb4 was stronger, trapping the black queen on a7!

73...♙a5 74. ♘xc6 ♙xc3 75. ♘xa7+ ♖xa7



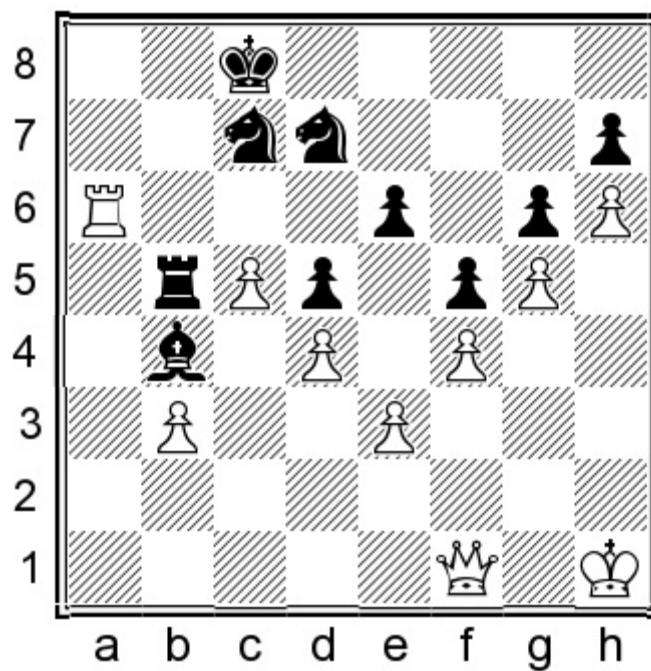
Position after: 75... ♖xa7

Black has three pieces for the queen, but Kozul is now tearing Black's position apart.

76. ♖c1! b4 77. ♖cc2

Getting ready to open the a-file!

77... ♗c7 78. axb4 ♖xa2 79. ♖xa2 ♘xb4 80. ♖a4 ♖b5 81. ♖a6!



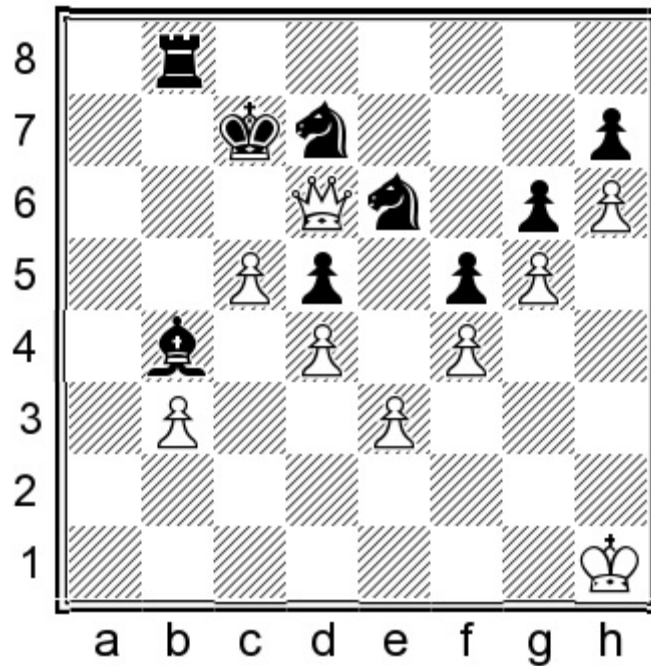
Position after: 81. ♖a6!

This move is the key that opens the way for the white queen to invade with devastating effect.

81... ♜b8 82. ♖xe6! ♞xe6 83. ♚a6+ ♔c7 84. ♚d6+

And at this moment Tukmakov resigned since he was losing the knight and the d5-pawn, after which White's central pawns would decide the issue. Great domination by the white queen!

1-0



Position after: 84. ♚d6+

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