

365 Steps to Mastering Chess Through Its History

**A little work every day makes you a
better chess player!**

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365 Steps to Mastering Chess Through Its History

**A little work every day makes you a
better chess player!**

**Thinkers' Chess Academy with
Grandmaster Thomas Luther
Volume 7**

Heinz Brunthaler

Thinkers Publishing 2024



Key to Symbols

!	a good move
?	a weak move
!!	an excellent move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
□	only move
⊙	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

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Introduction

Requirements for working with this book:

This is not a book for complete beginners. You don't have to be a rated player let alone a class or master-strength player, but you should at least have some experience as a casual player. Otherwise, you will soon find it difficult to follow the combinations and positions presented.

Not all positions shown in this book can be solved or understood by every reader from the diagram, even if we sometimes have two or more diagrams for a solution. It is therefore helpful to have a chess set on which you can look at difficult positions move by move.

If you do not yet own a chess set and would like to buy one, you should consider one with tournament dimensions of 4.5 to 5 cm square size and a king height of 90+ mm. This will get you used to playing OTB (Over The Board) and will allow you to play comfortably with other chess friends.

If you have only played online so far, you will find that there are differences between 2-D and 3-D chess.

Foreword

The game of chess as we know it today (some of the rules changed in the 15th century) is almost 600 years old and has undergone enormous developments during this time. It is a long way from the simple, flawed game of that time to the grandmasterly game, or even perfect computer chess of today.

But all the many elements of the game – the tactical motifs, endgame techniques and strategy – first had to be seen, understood and passed on by someone. Much of what even low-ranking players know today was found or developed by talented players and experts and helped to refine the game. The saying “we stand on the shoulders of giants” applies here in full.

This book takes the reader on a journey through time, starting with the Arabian chess of more than a thousand years ago, through the Middle Ages, to one of the greatest players of modern times – none other than Bobby Fischer.

You will see that the development of the game is like that of the human being who evolves and masters it better and better. From simple, error-prone or trap-oriented play with an advance calculation of 1 - 2 moves, to longer calculation and deeper insight. And, if you are not yet a very experienced player, reading this book will also help your development as a chess player, giving you new ideas and experiences. Even experienced players will certainly see many new and amazing things, as the history of the game has many highlights.

With this in mind, your author wishes you a lot of fun with chess and good entertainment with this book

Heinz Brunthaler, 2024

Month 1

From the game's Origins and Arabian Chess to the new Rules

The age and origin of chess is shrouded in mystery and surrounded by legend. It is thought to have originated in India in the 3rd century AD and reached Persia in the 6th century. The game then came to Europe in the 9th century. At that time, the rules of the game were different from those of today, with the exception of the rook and knight. The queen and bishop, which today are long range pieces, could only make short moves and were barely stronger than pawns. The build up of games developed very slowly. Because of this, "pre-prepared" positions were used, known as "tabiyas".

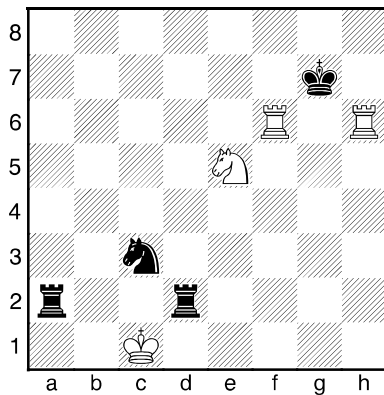
The turning point came in the 15th century when the rules were changed to their current form, making the game faster and more dynamic. By today's standards, the games of this time were still quite primitive, with mostly wild attacks.

However, techniques and methods were developed that are still used today, such as combinational motifs.

The introduction of printing soon made it possible to publish books on chess and thus pass on the knowledge gained to a broader audience.

This month we will see examples of composed positions as well as those from games played at the time.

○ / ● 1. **Al Adli**, 9th century

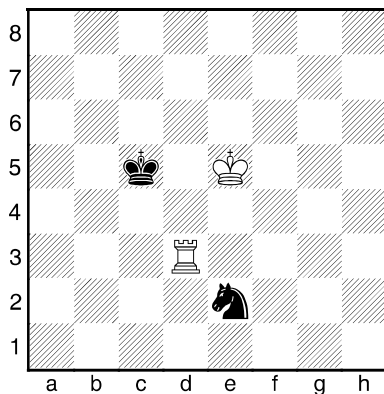


Actually, in the original position a black queen stands on b3 and a white queen on g5. But as the queen could only move one square in any direction, it did not influence the game. Black threatens mates in 1 and 2 moves, which should be no challenge even to inexperienced readers.

Find all the mates for Black!

Can White give mate too (his only way to avoid defeat)?

2. **Seirab**, 9th century

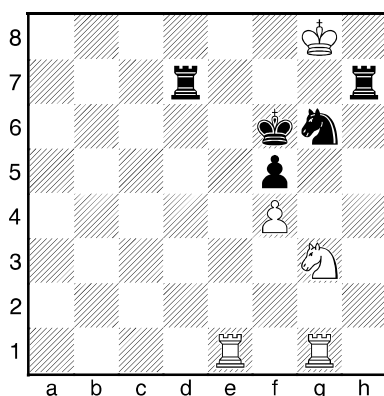


World champion José Raúl Capablanca (1888–1942) said: "In the endgame think in plans, not in moves!"

Seirab already heeded this good advice a thousand years earlier and found the plan for the rook to win against the knight.

Can you find the plan too?

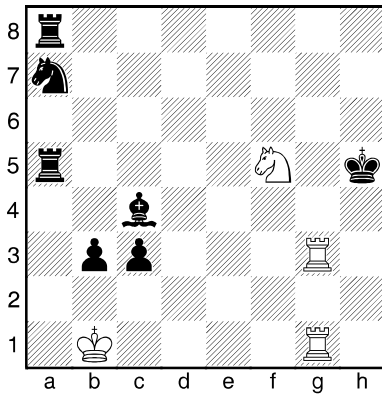
3. **Naim Al-Khadim**, 9th century



Similar to #1, White is again threatened by mates on g7 and h8. However, he can turn the tables by opening a file for one of his rooks and dragging the black king to a mating square.

Can you find the mate in 3 moves?

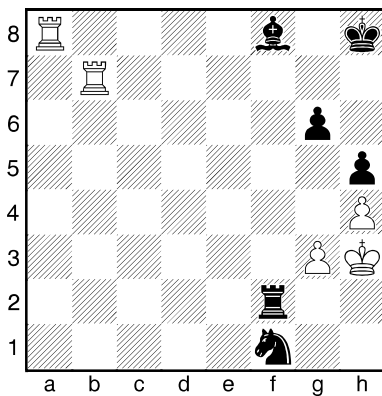
● 4. Abu-Bakr, Before 946



The old masters really loved a dramatic situation. Again, Black is threatened with three mates in one move. Black needs five moves of his own to deliver mate.

Do you see how it works?

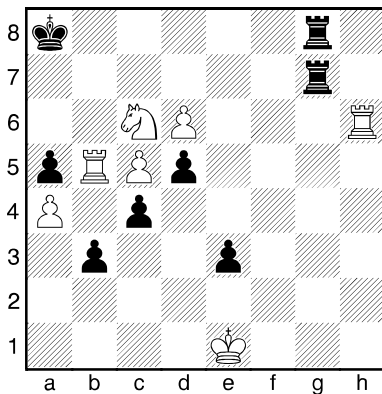
5. Al Adli, around 900



Again, a mate threat (on h2) and this time there is no counterattack possible. Taking the bishop on f8 avoids the mate but then the endgame is hopeless.

Find a way to save the day!

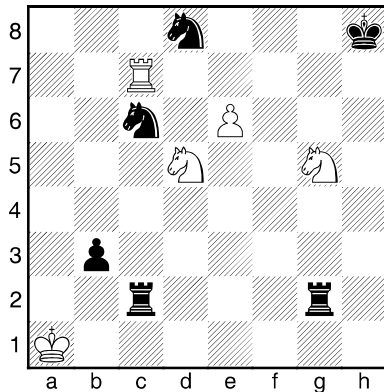
6. Al Adli, around 900



White threatens the "**Arabian Mate**", the oldest tactical motif, and additionally possesses a strong passed pawn. Black's rooks have to stand guard and may hope to have a chance to support their own passed pawns.

To win is not enough. You have to find a mating attack for White!

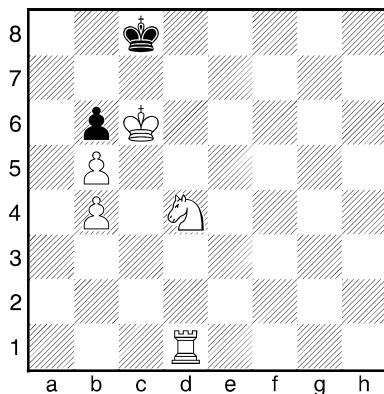
7. From the manuscript of As-ad Efendi, around 1050



Again, Black has a seemingly winning position. But White turned the tables with a nice maneuver that we can find in many puzzles in the following centuries.

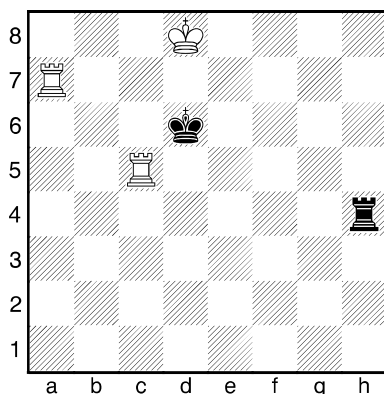
It's not easy to find but try!

8. Francesco Vincent, 1495



Sometimes it was not enough to win a position, but certain conditions were attached to it. Here, for example, you have to give check with the first pawn and deliver mate with the second pawn, which of course complicates the win considerably.

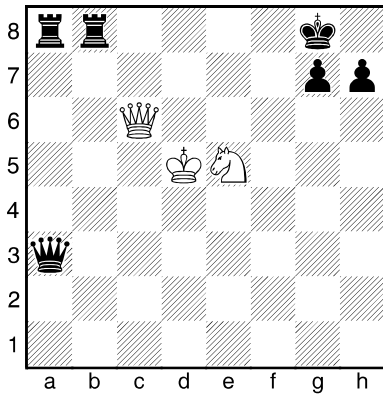
9. From a manuscript 15th century



Isn't it sad? White is a rook up but cannot win because either one rook is lost or otherwise White is checkmated.

Or... is there a way?

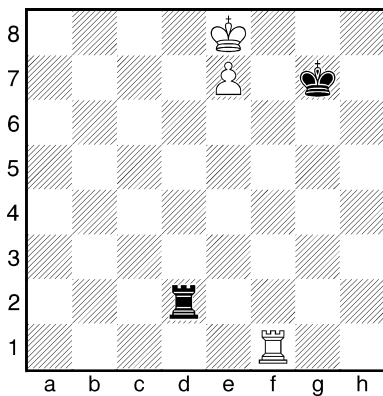
10. Lucena, 1497



The invention of printing was also a great advance for the spread of chess knowledge. The author of the first printed chess book of importance was the Spaniard **Lucena**, who showed in it a mate motif that is still regularly seen today.

Surely you know it and can easily find the solution.

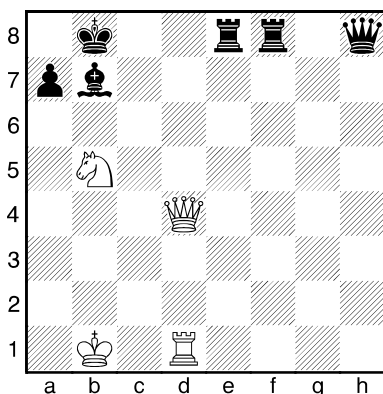
11. Lucena, 1497



The position looks like a draw as the king cannot make room for his pawn without being bothered by checks of the rook.

Lucena found an elegant maneuver to overcome this problem. The position is one of the first shown in most rook endgame books even today!

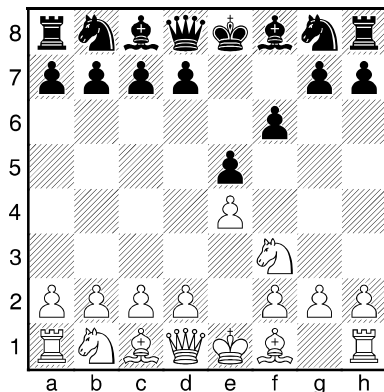
12. Damiano, 1512



The Portuguese apothecary Damiano published a chess book in Rome in 1512, which contains numerous interesting positions. One of them is a version of Lucena's smothered mate, but directed against a king on the queenside.

You will surely recognize it.

13. Damiano, 1512

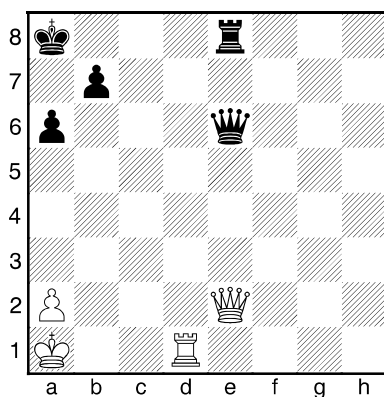


After 1.e2-e4 e7-e5 2.Ng1-f3 f7-f6 (D) the **Damiano Defence** is on the board. But it's a misnomer; Damiano even criticized this opening.

It's obvious that ...f7-f6 is not a good move: it does nothing for development and takes away a good square for the knight.

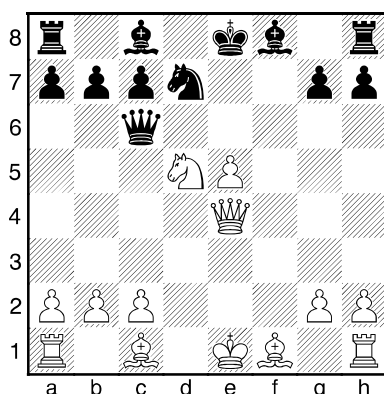
But that's not all, find out more yourself! Best set up the position on your board!

14. Damiano, 1512



After our long strenuous work on the Damiano Defense, today we have a very easy example. But this tactical pattern decides game after game even today.

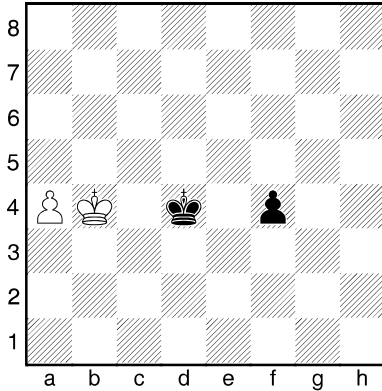
15. Damiano, 1512



Black has played the opening badly and must now defend against the knight fork on c7.

How can White make the best use of his superior position?

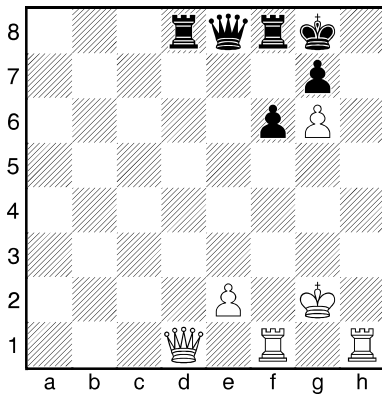
16. ● Damiano, 1512



Even in the early days of modern chess, precise calculations were necessary in situations like this.

Who will win the pawn race and... is that enough to win the game?

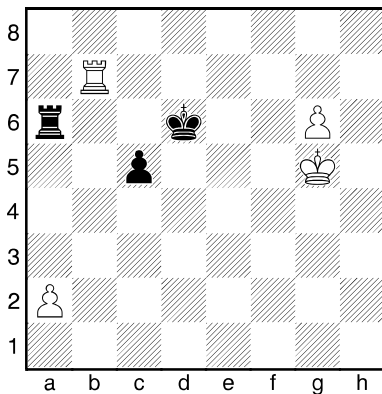
17. Damiano, 1512



Now we come to the highlight of Damiano's work. The black king is already in a mating net. But the rook currently opposes the white queen. The solution is a basic pattern for attacks on the open h-file.

Can you see how it works?

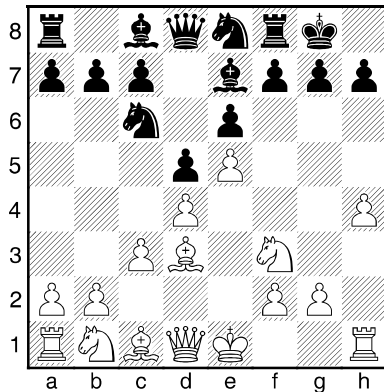
18. Damiano, 1512



Some techniques from olden times are still valid and useable. However, in some cases improvements were found that can significantly change the result. Here we see an example of this in one of Damiano's endgame positions.

What do you think about this position?

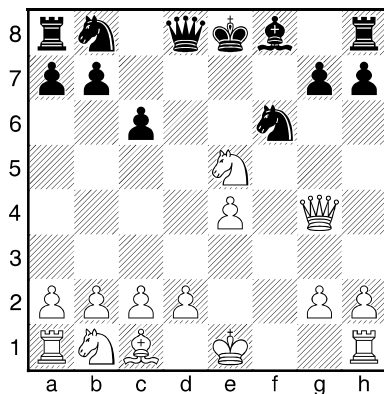
19. Domenico – N.N. from Damiano's book 1512



A well-known technique is the bishop sacrifice on h7. We see it most often in the French Defense and Queen's Gambit. Damiano showed an early version of it (with the pawn on h4) in his book.

I'm sure you know what to do!

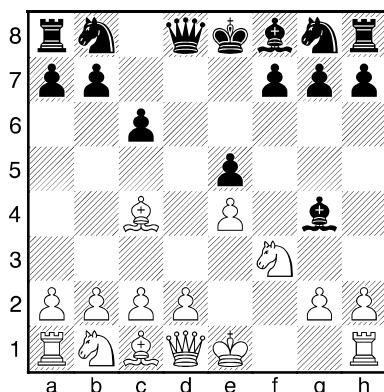
20. Lopez – Leonardo, Rome 1560



This is a position from a game between two of the best players of their time. But opening knowledge was still very rudimentary at that time and White can decide the game in a few moves.

Can you do it too?

21. Lopez – Leonardo, Rom 1560

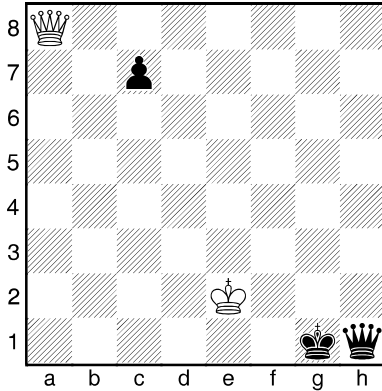


Today we'll take a closer look at the opening from yesterday's game. How did the lost position come about?

Black's last move was **5...d6xe5?** (D)

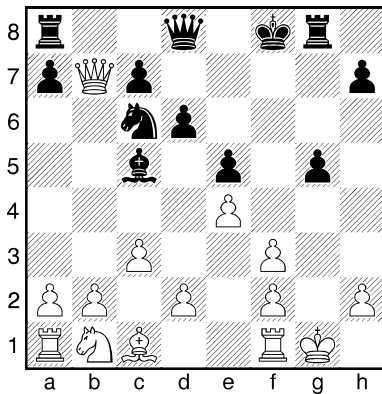
Do you agree with this choice? If not, what would be better?

22. Polerio, 1590



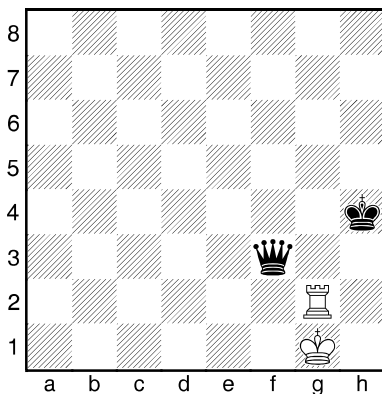
It looks like an easy draw. Exchange the queens and capture the last black pawn and it's all over. But is this really the logical end to the game?

● 23. Polerio, 1590



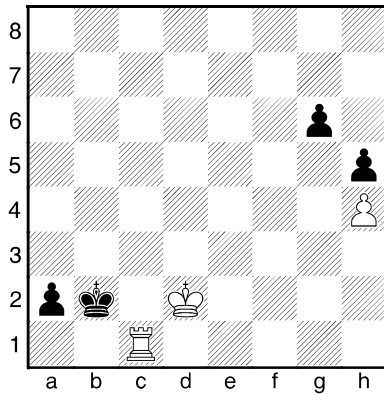
Most games of the old times are very weak, not much better than Class-D play nowadays. But here we see a well executed attack against the king. Can you find the winning moves too?

24. Salvio, 1604



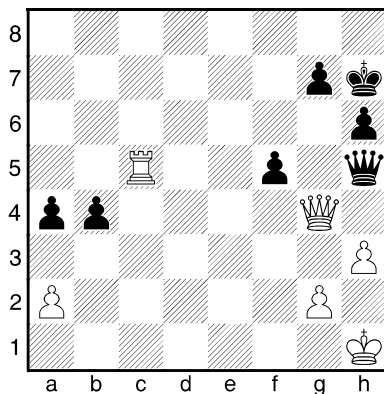
In the year 1604, the lawyer Alessandro **Salvio** from Naples showed some interesting endgame studies in his book. We start with the easiest. In most cases a queen can win against the rook. Sooner or later a double attack should be possible. But Salvio showed an exception. How can White defend himself against the mighty queen?

25. Salvio, 1604



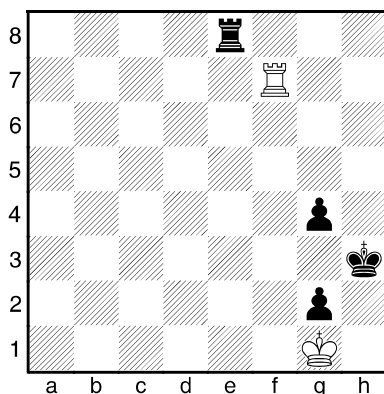
An easy endgame, isn't it? Sacrifice the rook for the passed pawn and go after the black pawns and it's a draw. But Salvio showed a tricky way to win for White. Can you find out how?

● 26. Ventura – Salvio, 1604



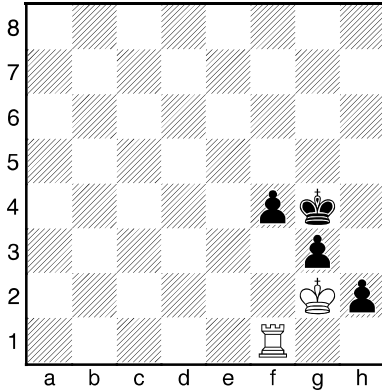
The position looks hopeless. After the exchange of queens, it's game over. But Salvio had a great idea. Try to find it – and don't be sad if you cannot, because it's really difficult to see!

27. Salvio, 1604



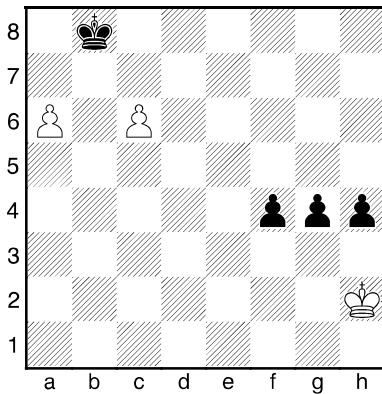
White seems to have no chance of escaping checkmate. But Salvio found a clever way out. Try to discover a way to avoid defeat!

28. Salvio, 1634



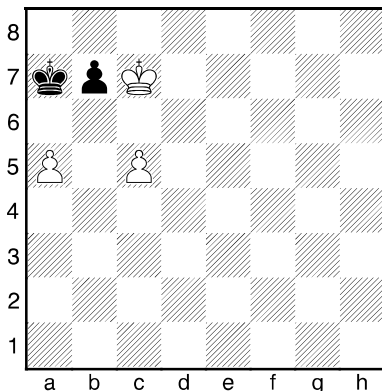
In the second edition of his book from 1604 Salvio showed some more end-games. This is one of them. It looks as if the pawns must overpower the rook. But Salvio found a draw in this position. How does it work?

29. Carrera, 1617



The work of the Sicilian priest Pietro **Carrera** was without influence because he negated castling and stuck to the old rules. But some of his endgames became a part of chess knowledge. The black king cannot move without losing instantly. However, his pawn phalanx threatens the opponent's king. Are they strong enough?

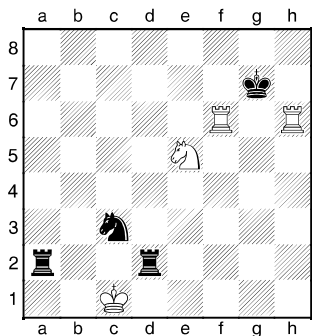
30. Carrera, 1617



After yesterday's long and hard calculations, we end the month with a much easier endgame. Black's king is in the corner, hoping for stalemate or that only the white a-pawn is left. With logic you can find the way to dash this hope!

From the Origins and the Arabian Chess to the new Rules

Solutions for days 1 - 30



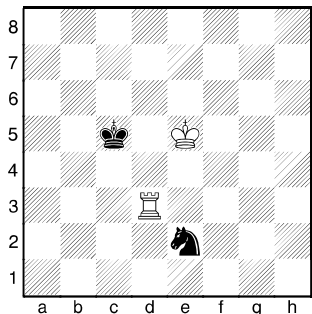
1. Al Adli

Black can choose between $1... \text{R}a2-c2\#$;
 $1... \text{R}d2-d1\#$ or $1... \text{R}d2-c2\#$

And if the knight wants to participate too:
 $1... \text{N}c3-e2+$ $2. \text{K}c1-b1$ $\text{R}d2-b2\#$

White needs much longer;

$1. \text{R}f6-g6+$ $\text{K}g7-f8$ $2. \text{R}h6-h8+$ $\text{K}f8-e7$
 $3. \text{R}h8-h7+$ $\text{K}e7-f8$ $4. \text{R}h7-f7+$ $\text{K}f8-e8$
 $5. \text{R}g6-g8\#$



2. Seirab

The correct – and only – plan is to separate king and knight. But that's not all. The knight has to be locked up in a quarter of the board together with the attackers' king and rook, and there he runs out of moves soon.

$1. \text{R}d3-e3$

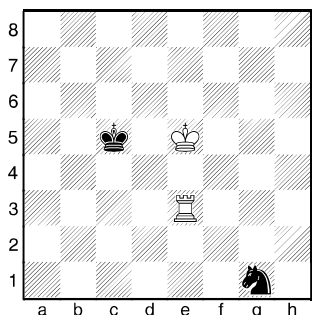
Forcing the knight away from the king. After other moves, king and knight can reunite e. g. $1.-- \text{K}c5-c4$ $2.-- \text{N}e2-c3$.

$1... \text{N}e2-g1$ (D2) $2. \text{K}e5-f5/e4$

A mistake is $2. \text{K}e5-f4?$ $\text{K}c5-d4$ $3. \text{R}e3-e1$ $\text{N}g1-h3+$ $4. \text{K}f4-f3$ $\text{N}h3-g5+$ $5. \text{K}f3-f4$
(or $5. \text{K}f3-g4$ $\text{N}g5-e4$) $5... \text{N}g5-h3+$ and the steed can escape or repeat.

$2... \text{K}c5-d4$ $3. \text{K}f5-f4$ $\text{K}d4-c4$

$4. \text{K}f4-g3$ $\text{K}c4-d4$ $5. \text{R}e3-e1$ Gotcha!!!!



D2