Variant Chess

Founded 1990

The magazine to broaden your chess horizons

Contents

The Chess Variant Pages

The officers of the *BCVS* have recently been contacted by David Howe, Editor in chief of *The Chess Variant Pages*, who has offered to reproduce selected articles from each issue of *Variant Chess* on their website. After discussing the matter we were happy to accept. The two organisations cover the same field, and *Variant Chess* will be brought to the attention of a much wider potential readership, while *The Chess Variant Pages* will extend their already formidable coverage of the field. Truly a meeting of minds.

The History of the Chess Variant Pages

In January 1995 Hans Bodlaender started a small website on chess variants. Later he wrote descriptions of a number of variants that he found most interesting (e.g. those of several historic chess variants). After a while, interest began to grow and people began to send additional materials; the older materials were improved. In the following years the website became better known, was mentioned in several places, and received more and more visitors *(and awards)*. The total of all hits up to the end of November 2000 is more than fifteen million. In the spring of 1997, David Howe offered his help in building the site, and in the spring of 1999 the editorial board was further increased, the site was moved and a domain name was obtained. In the week of 5-11 March 2001 alone, the site was augmented by an introduction to *Shogi*, information on the historic variant *Tamerlane Chess*, and ten new variants!

Deadline for Contributions to *VC38*

Please aim to deliver them by the first of June 2001.

UNBALANCED GAMES

by John Beasley

There is a class of chess games in which White and Black have different sets of men and perhaps different objectives. The concept is familiar in physical sport, where ball-and-stick games such as cricket and baseball are widely played, but in these games the players take each role in turn and the object is to score more points than the opponent. The simple "win or lose" result of chess is not amenable to such treatment, and unbalanced chess games can easily become "who wins?" puzzles rather than vehicles for competitive play. Even so, they have their interest, and they are particularly suitable as subjects for "own invention" play and analysis: something to keep the mind busy when no opponent is to hand for a conventional game.

The simplest are the **one-against-many** games in which a single man with superior powers is pitted against a large army of standard men. Such games are very old. A quick browse through Murray's "History" brought to light the game "De cercar la liebre" from the "Alfonso" manuscript of 1283 (Murray, *A History of Chess*, pp 568-9, 616-7) in which ten to twelve men have to catch a hare on a 5x5 board, and I am sure those knowledgeable in board game history will be able to tell me of still earlier examples.

The same passage of Murray mentions the game of Fox and Geese which I remember from my childhood (White has four geese which move one square diagonally forward, Black one fox which moves one square diagonally in any direction, no capturing, the fox aims to reach White's first rank and the geese aim to hem him in). I eventually worked out that the geese could always win, though not if they were careless, and this seems to be typical of such games: either the single man has a quick win or the many have a slow, and the analysis is not greatly difficult. For example, Murray (p 347) mentions a work by Lala Raja Babu which describes various games

including a "Shatranj diwana shah" where a solitary king able to move as any piece is pitted against a complete army. This game has attracted some attention in the modern literature, and *The Encyclopedia of Chess Variants* (pp 183-4) shows a win for the army. The rules can easily be varied in detail, and the Chess Variants pages (www.chessvariants.com) describe a version "Tiger hunt" in which the complete army lacks its queen. I think the army still wins (king, knights, and bishops appear sufficient to support the pawn barrier, leaving the rooks free to stake out new ground), but have not proved it in detail.

Slightly more sophisticated are **few-against-many** games, where the single man has companions. Murray mentions another game from Lala Raja Babu in which two lions on d1/e1 face 32 goats on ranks 5 to 8, but I cannot find the detailed rules. Better known is Monster Chess, where the initial array is
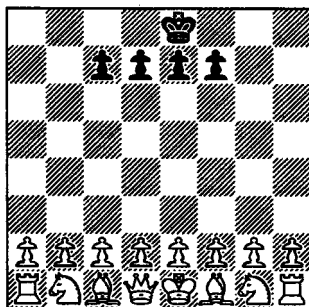

and Black is allowed to make two moves at once. But this also is a win for the larger army (for a crib, see the Chess Variants pages, item "Muenster Chess"), and the reason lies in the fact that the smaller army still cannot afford to allow a man to be captured; even two-for-one swaps are likely to be good for the larger army.

Much more scope is offered by **multiple pawn games**, where one side lacks a queen or some other man but has a number of extra pawns to compensate. Unlike most chess variants, these have been played at master level. They were played by Labourdonnais and Deschappelles at the Régence (*Encyclopedia*, p 223), and Alexandre's *Collection des plus beaux problèmes d'échecs* of 1846 gives four games by Kieseritsky. One

of these is in the *Encyclopedia*; here is another.
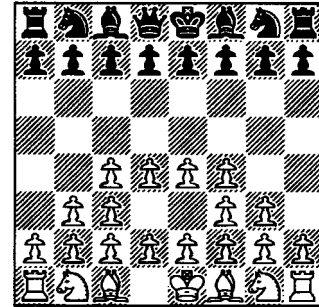
White Kieseritsky, Black Desloges. **1.d4-d5 d7-d6 2.e4-e5** (White wants to throttle Black rather than to give him open lines, and my instincts would be to play 2.f5 aiming for a stonewall formation) **2...e7-e6 3.e2-e4 c7-c6 4.d5xe6 f7xe6 5.d2-d4 Nb8-a6 6.Bf1-d3 b7-b6 7.Bc1-e3 Bc8-b7 8.Ng1-e2 g7-g6 9.Nb1-d2 Ng8-h6 10.h2-h3 Bf8-g7 11.0-0 0-0 12.a2-a3 d6-d5 13.c4xd5 c6xd5 14.c3-c4 Ra8-c8** (in the light of what follows, ...Qd7 and ...Rfc8 might have been better) **15.c2-c3 Na6-c7**:
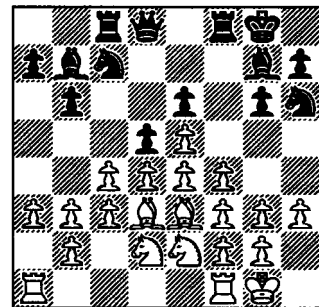
16.Ra1-d1 (a truly mysterious rook move, but "D1B1" appears later so it cannot be a misprint) **16...a7-a6** (Black is playing to open lines on the queen's side) **17.a3-a4 Qd8-d7 18.g3-g4 b6-b5! 19.a4xb5?** (this gives Black an open file at once and must surely be wrong) **19...a6xb5 20.c4xb5 Nc7xb5 21.c3-c4?** (and this is worse, loosening White's position and opening lines which Black will be able to exploit better than White) **21...d5xc4** (the source has "D7C4", which had me blinking for a minute) **22.b3xc4 Nb5-c7 23.b2-b3 Rc8-a8** (I would have been tempted by 22...Na6 aiming for b4, but it might have been difficult to maintain a man there) **24.d4-d5 Nh6-f7 25.Be3-d4** (25.d6

would avoid what is to come) **e6xd5 26.c4xd5 Nc7xd5** (Black thinks this sacrifice is worth while, and I agree) **27.e4xd5 Bb7xd5**:
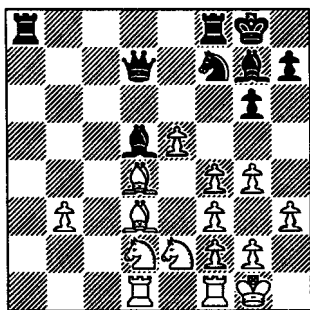
I reckon Black should now win. He still has queen for knight, he can rampage at will on the queen's side, and White's pawns are not far enough advanced to be a serious threat. But he frittered away his advantage, and it was not to be. Play continued **28.Nd2-c4 Qd7-b7 29.Nc4-d2 Rf8-b8 30.Rd1-b1 Ra8-a2** (this attack is ephemeral, and Black should probably bring bNf7 and bBg7 into better play before indulging in tactics) **31.Nd2-e4 Ra2xe2?** (and his material superiority is certainly not so great that he can afford moves like this) **32.Bd3xe2 Bd5xe4 33.f3xe4 Qb7xe4 34.Bd4-e3 g6-g5** (an understandable attempt to undermine wPe5, but I think it hurts Black more than White) **35.g2-g3** (better was 36.Bf3 with e6 and f5 to follow) **35...g5xf4 36.g3xf4 Nf7-d8 37.Be2-c4+ Kg8-h8 38.Rf1-d1 Bg7-h6 39.Rb1-c1 Qe4-f3** (whyever not the natural 39...Bxf4?) **40.Be3-d4** (in those days gentlemen would only attack, but the consolidating 40.Bf1 seems better) **Qf3xh3 41.Rd1-d3 Qh3-h4** (41...Qxg4+ loses to 42.Rg3, because of the mate threat on g8) **42.e5-e6+ Bh6-g7 43.Bd4xg7+ Kh8xg7 44.Rd3-d7+** and Black played **44...Kg7-f8** allowing **45.e6-e7+**. Had he not thrown away a good attacking piece by the overconfident 31...Rxe2, the result might have been very different.

According to Hans Bodlaender and Ralph Betza, writing in the Chess Variants pages, Labourdonnais and Deschappelles found eight pawns for the queen to be too much, and "probably they played with five or six or seven extra Pawns". There still

seems scope for experiment here, and I doubt if the history of these games is finished.

According to the *Encyclopedia*, multiple pawn games date from the 18th century. Wholly modern are **anti-computer odds games**. These exploit a blind spot inherent in most computer chess programs, that if the machine thinks it has a win on material but cannot see how to win more material or force mate within its calculation horizon, it simply optimizes its position in some sense and then plays neutral moves to preserve its advantage. There is a hilarious description from the early days of computer chess in Bill Hartston's *How to Cheat at Chess*. Anti-computer games are even more ephemeral than most, because odds which give a good game against one computer may be hopelessly impractical against the next, but they can be good fun while they last.

For example, in the 1980s I used to play against White Knight II on my BBC Model B at odds of queen. Impossible, you may say, since White Knight II was competently written and could win won endings. But I used the standard anti-computer strategy, blocking the centre and giving it nothing to bite on, and once it had completed its development it would see no way of improving its position and would start noodling. Meanwhile, I would gradually build up a king's-side attack, ending in a breakthrough sacrifice, and even with no queen to sharpen the attack I was able to score something like 40%.

More radically, I sometimes play against Genius 2 on my 486/25 with the following array:
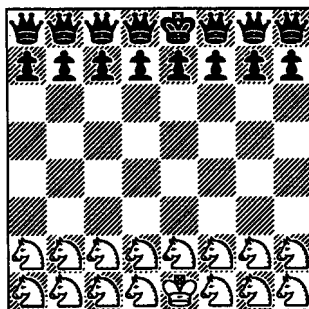
Genius is willing to accept this as a starting position, and on material it

should be an easy win for the queens. In practice... **1.Nh1-g3 e7-e5** (the machine was set to five seconds a move) **2.Na1-b3 d7-d5 3.Na2-c3 c7-c5 4.Nh2-f3** (a blunder, but I hadn't played for a while) **4...c5-c4 5.Nb3-d4** (White normally loses a knight for two pawns early on, and while a knight for one pawn is bad he will get a second because d5 cannot be defended) **5...e5xd4 6.Nf3xd4 a7-a6 7.Ng1-f3 b7-b5 8.Nc1-a2** (not pleasant, but I didn't think I could stand ...b4 winning a second knight) **8...Qd8-f6 9.Nf1-e3 Qa8-b7 10.Ng2-f4 h7-h6 11.Nf4xd5 Qf6-d8**:
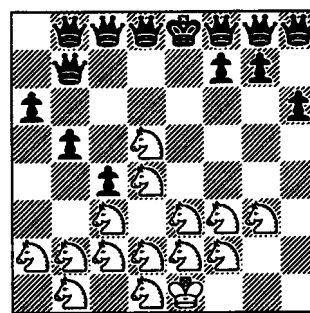
This is a typical position coming out of the opening. Now the White army will gradually flow forwards (the pawn on c4 is awkward but not insuperable), and Black has got to sacrifice some material to simplify things. He can afford to give away any number of queens for two knights each, but the computer doesn't think like this, and usually it refuses to part with any material at all until White's increasing command of the board forces it to do so. I eventually won from this position, but only by making no oversight (for once); the slightest mistake, and the queens pounce.

Absurd though they may seem, games of this kind have two great practical advantages: (a) the chances can be made more or less even by adjusting the relative rates of play, and (b) whereas a human player, once he has found a guaranteed winning strategy, will spoil the game by using it all the time, a computer has a "randomizer" and does something different every time you play. Try them out for yourselves. A serious contribution to chess development they are not, but they will give more than a little passing pleasure.
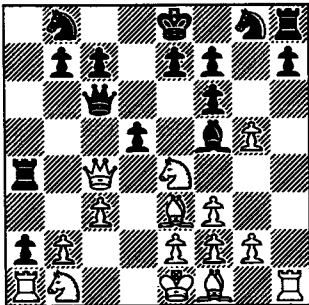
DYNAMO CHESS (PART II)

by George Jelliss

AISE GRAND PRIX 95

George Jelliss v Fabio Dulcich:

1.Ng1-f3	Bf8-g7/g7-h6
2.Nf3-d4/h2-f3	Bg7-d4/Nd4-c3
3.Bc1-e3/d2-g5	Qd8-d6/d7-d5
4.Qd1-a4/c2E+	

Self-capture is allowed.
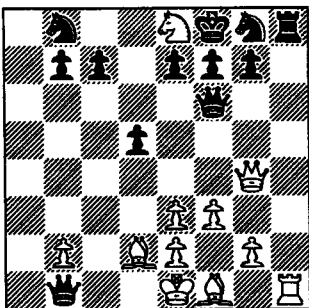
4. -	Qd6-c6/h6-f6
5.Qa4-c4/Bd4E	Bc8-f5
6.Nc3-e4/a2-c3	Ra8-a4/a7-a2

7.Ne4-d6/f2-e4+	Ke8-f8
8.Qc4/Ra4E	a2-b1Q/Nb1E
9.Ra1E/Qb1E	Bf5-d3/e4E
10.Qc4-g4	Qc6-c3/c3E+
11.Be3-d2/g5-e3	Qc3-f6/f6-g7
12.Nd6-e8	Bd3E/h7-b1Q+

This devastating move came as a complete surprise!

13.Ke1-f2	Rh8-h7/Rh1E
14.Bf1-d3/e2-c4	Rh7-h4!
15.Qg4-g3/g7-g6	Qb1-d1
16.Qg3/g6-g4	Qf6-e5/b2E
17.Bd2/e3-f4	Qe5-e3+
18.Bd2E/Qe3E	Qd1-d2/Bd3-d4+
19.Bd4-e3/Kf2-g1	

19.Bd4-a7/Kf2-c5 taking the WK through check is not permitted.

19. -	Qd2-g2/g2E
	mate

AISE GRAND PRIX 96

Paul Yearout v George Jelliss:

1.Qd1-d3/d2-d6	

*One of the ideas of this opening is 2...Qd3-h7/h7E Rh8E/Qh7E 3.Rh1-/h2-h8Q.*

1. -	Qd8-f6/e7-h4

To stop the h-pawn promotion.

2.Qd3-e4/h7E+	Bf8-e7/d6E
3.Qe4/h4E	Qf6/f2-f4

Enabling 4...Qf6-h4 +.

4.Ng1-f3	Qf6-c3/g7-e5+
5.Nf3-d2	Be7-h4+
6.Ke1-d1	Qc3/Nd2E
7.f4/e5-d6+	Bc8-d7/d7-e6
8.Qe4-d4	Ng8-f6
9.Nb1-c3/Qc3-d5	Qd5-b3/a2E
10.Bf1-d3/e2-c4	e5
11.Bc1/f4-e3	f7-f6/Nf6-f4

The pawn makes a single step but pushes the knight a double step - see the pawn rules.
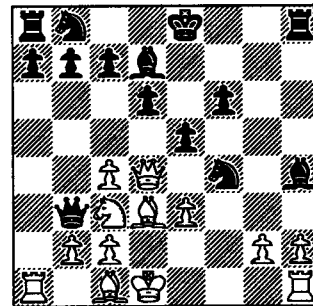
12,Nc3-d5	Bd7-g4+
13.Kd1-d2	Nf4-d5/Nd5-b6
14.c4/Nd5-e6	Qb3-c3+
15.Kd2-c1/Bc1E	

15.Ke3/e3-f4 is the only other escape - into more trouble.

15. -	Ne6-f4
16.Qd4-d5/d6E	Qc3-d2+
17.Kc1-b1	Ra8-a5/a7-a2+
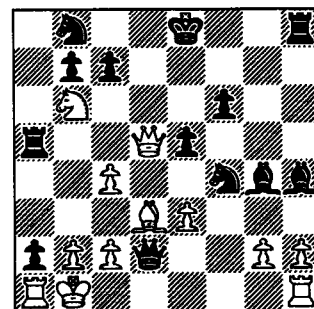
White resigns.

George Jelliss v Paul Yearout:

1.Qd1-c2/c2-b3	Qd8-d6/d7-d3

2.Bc1-d2/d2-f4	Nb8-c6
3. e2-e4	c7-c5/Nc6-c4

The knight sails into play from an unexpected direction.

4.b3/Nc4-d5	Nd5-e3
5.Bf1-d3/d3E	Ne3/g2E
6.e4-e5	Bc8-f5
7.Qc2-c4/c5E	Ng8-f6?

8.Qc4-f7/f7E+	Ke8-d7
9.Bd3/Nb1-c2	Nf6-e4
10.Bd3-b5+?	

Probably premature but something has to be done to avoid massacre on the d-file.
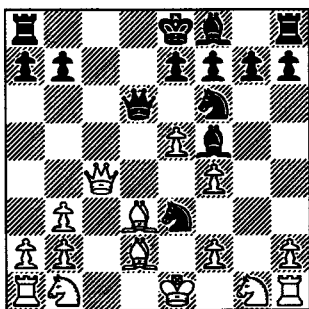
10. -	Bf5-e6/Kd7-c8
11.Qf7-f4/f4-f3	Qd6-d2/Bd2E+
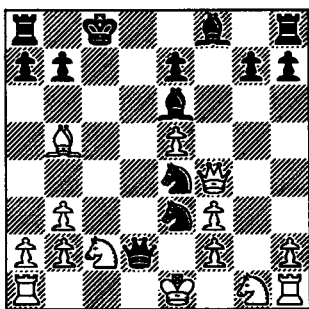
12.Ke2	

The only escape!

12. -	Bf8-d6/e7-b4

A block on d6 is needed to stop Qf4-c7/e5-b8Q +.

13.e5-d6/Bd6-c7	Qd2-d3/d6E+
14.Bb5E/Qd3E	Bc7E/Qf4E

We are into an endgame
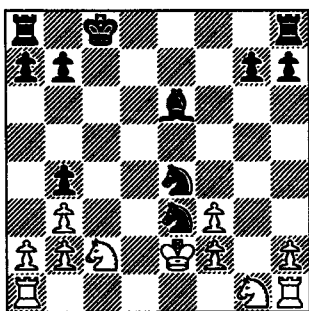
15.Ng1-f3/f3-e5	Be6-f5/Kc8-e6

16.Nf3-e5/e5-d7	Ra8-d8
17.Nc2-d4	Bf5-d3/Ne4-c2+
18.Ne5-f7/Bd3-e5	Rd8-d7/d7-d6
19.Ra1-c1	Rh8-c8
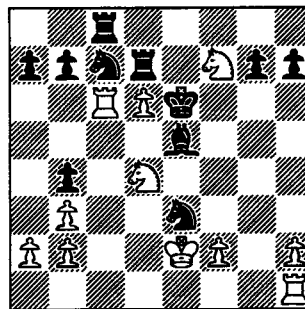
20.Rc1-c6/Nc2-c7	

Saving the Pd6.

20. -	Ke6-f7/Nf7-g8
21.Ng8-e7	Be5-g3/d6-f4
22.Nd4-f5	Rd7-d5
23.Rh1-h5/h2-h6	Ne3-f1/Rd5-e3+
24.Nf5/Re3-d1	Rd1-d6
25.Rc6-c3	Bg3-f2/f2E

There is a threat here of Bf2E/a7-g1Q.

26.Ne7/Rc8E	Nc7-d5
27.Rh5-g5/Nf5-e5+	

Rg5 to control g1.

27. -	Kf7-e6
28.h6-g7/g7-f8	f8/g7-h6
29.Ne7-g8	

With the idea 30.Ng8E/h6-g8Q.
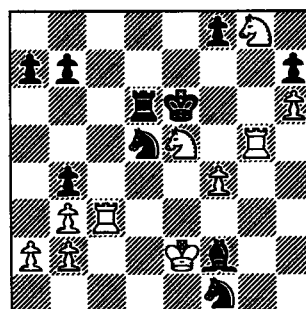
29. -	Nd5-f6/b4-d5
30.Rg5-g2/Ng8-g5	Ke6-e5/Ne5-e4
31.Ke2/Nf1E	Nf6-e4/Ne4-d2
32.Nd2/Ne4-f6	Nf6-d5/d5-b4
33.Rg2-g5/Ng5-g6+	Ke5-f6
34.Rg5-d5/Nd5E	Rd6-e6+
35.Rc3-f3/b3-e3	Bf2-c5/e3-b6+
36.Nd2-e4	
resigns	

There will be more Dynamo Chess games from the AISE Grand Prix 1996 in part III of George's article in *VC38*.

THE COURIER GAME

by Paul Byway

This particular 'Great Chess' always interested me, in part because of its long documented history (first mentioned 1202 A.D.). It seems to have been restricted to the Holy Roman Empire: I wonder if the Thirty Years War killed it off? A painting of a Courier game by Lucas von Leyden is well known, but only the other day another candidate came to my notice - a drawing by Jacobus Heyblocq (1623-1690). The board is clearly 8×12, and although the number of squares is usually dismissed as evidence I fancy this is only justified for the medieval period, when realism was at a discount.
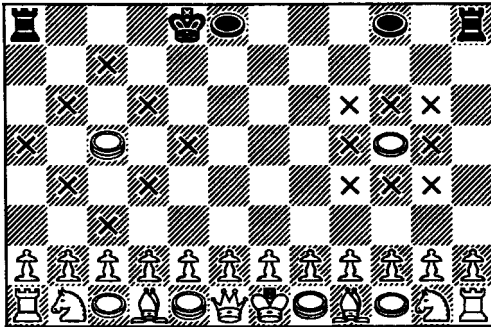
In 1970 I moved to Hertfordshire and joined the Hilltop (Hatfield) chess club. There my attempt to modernise the Courier game had its first lengthy trial. The diagram below contains the essence of the changes.

The joker (c1,i1) has a king's move (i.e. a mann in the original Courier game) and the courier (e1,h1) is some distance removed from the original alfil - but I was intent on increasing the *power* of the pieces. It was an error. Some two decades passed before extended experiments at the Powdermill chess club (Waltham Abbey) resulted in the present rules (see next article). The problem with the joker is that it is worth too much (4 points - you can checkmate with K+J) but it isn't mobile enough to escape trouble - so you must hide it until the endgame. This is just what we do with the king in Chess of course.

The (type I) courier works well with pawns (1.e4 e5 2.Ce3 attacks the pawn e5 and supports 3.d4 or 3.f4) and covers all the squares of one colour, but it lacks mobility - particularly going forward. The present (type II) courier is much more mobile; indeed it is faster than a knight. The Achilles heel of a type II courier is the hole at d4 after 1.e4, 2.Ce3 but this was cured by replacing joker by fers. The fers (being cheap) has no fear of being mobile.

The Black pieces in the diagram above show one feature that I *was* sorry to lose - double castling. The Black king has castled queenside with an unmoved joker and is now set up to castle a second time with the rook: simultaneously the joker moves towards the centre. I'm not convinced though, that castling is a good idea on a wide board - so it's a small loss.

Of those early experiments I remember little except an ending in which R+3 pawns drew against J+4 pawns (all on the same side. Some time ago I discovered that I had recorded one game (only) of all that were played. It was dated 3rd January 1971. I give it here 'for the record'.

White P.V.Byway   *Black Roy Talbot*

1. h2-h4	Nb8-c6	2. g2-g4	e7-e5
3.Nk1-j3	Ce8-e6	4.Ce1-e3	f7-f6
5.Ch1-h3	Ch8-h6	6.Bj1-g3	d7-d5
7. f2-f4	d5-d4	8.Ce3-f2	*(still*
defending the f-pawn)		8. ...	g7-g5
9. h4xg5	f6xg5	10. f4-f5	Ce6-d5
11. 0-0	Ch6-f6	12. e2-e3	h7-h6
13. 0-0	Bi8-h7	14.Ch3-h5	Qf8-g7
15.Ch5xh7	Qg7xh7	16.Bd1-f3	e5-e4
17.Bf3-g2	d4-d3	18.Nb1-c3	*(Black*
has over-reached)		18. ...	Nc6-b4
19.Nc3xd5	Nb4xc2	20.Ra1-b1	c7-c6
21.Nd5xf6+	Bd8xf6	22.Bg2xe4	0-0-0
23.Qf1xd3	Nc2-b4	24.Qd3-c4	Qh7-e7
25. a2-a3	Nb4-d5	26. b2-b4	Bd6-e5
27. b4-b5	Ra8-c8?	28.Be4xd5	Be5xg3
29.Cf2xg3	Qe7-d8	30. b5xc6	Jf8-e7
(a joker moves!)		31.Rb1xb7	Je7-d6
32.Bd5-f7+	Ke8-f8	33.Bf7-g6	Rc8-c7
34.Jh1-g2	*(clears a*	*line for the*	*rook)*
34. ...	Jd6-d5	35.Qc4-b4+	Kf8-g7
36.Qb4-c3+	Kg7-g8	37.Cg3xg5	h6xg5
38.Rj1-h1	Jd5-d4	39.Qc3xd4	Qd8xd4
40.Rb7-b8+	Kg8-g7	41.Rh1-h7+	Kg7-f6
42.Rb8-f8+	Kf6-e5	43. e3xd4+	Ke5xd4
44.Rh7xc7	Resigns		

OTHER VARIANTS

This is as good a place as any to record the other variants of the 8x12 game that so far have come to my notice.

Courier-Spiel

John Gollon is reported to have sent materials from an unfinished book on chess variants to Eric Greenwood in 1976: Eric then (1997) passed them on to Hans Bodlaender whose account I am following. Courier -Spiel is a more modern variant of the Courier game, mentioned in 1821 by H.G.Albers of Lüneburg as being played in the Ströbeck area. This information was later repeated by Verney in *Chess Eccentricities*. See the next diagram.

The courier (d1, i1) has the move of the modern bishop.
The bishop (c1, j1) has the moves of (fers + alfil). *Note that when moving two squares it a leaper like the knight.*
The councillor (e1) has the moves of (king + knight).
The fool (h1) has the move of a king.
There is no question of royalty or check in these last two.
Note that the king is standing on the left of the queen on a square of its own colour. In castling the king moves to c1 or j1 and the rook to d1 or i1. Castling is more restricted than in Chess: none of the squares a1 to f1 can be under attack for kingside castling for instance, and neither piece may have moved.

The pawn move is as in Chess, except that after the pawn has been moved to the 8th rank the player must make two moves elsewhere before the newly promoted piece can move. The details are not clarified, such as when the pawn changes power, and whether or not it can be captured in the interim.
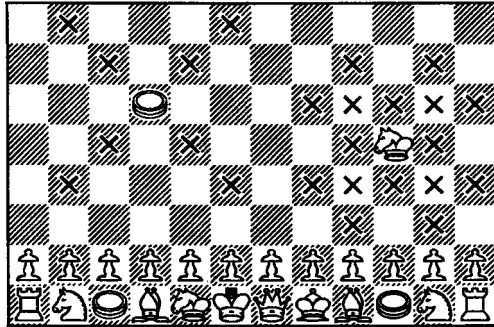
I have my own axe to grind of course, but I don't think this is a very elegant construct. In particular the searchlight glare of powerful pieces washes out any subtle shades.

Councellor Chess

Don't blame me for the spelling. I think that in English or American usage we should have 'ci' or 'se'.
John Gollon received this variant *(before 1976 then)* from R. Douglas Wells of College Park, Maryland. The layout is given in the following diagram:-
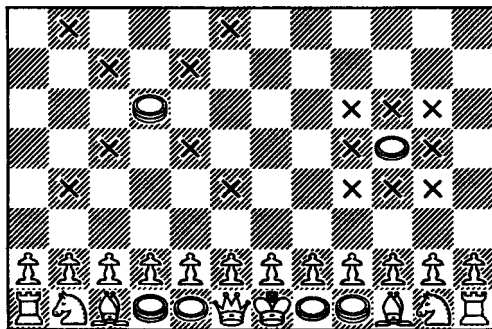
The elephant (d1, i1) moves like a bishop, but up to two squares only: it has no jumping power.
The councellor (e1, h1) moves like a king or mann.
In this variant the bishop is at c1 or j1 and thus already on the same diagonal as its opposite number. I think this is a defect. If it were on e1 it would be aimed directly at the enemy rook, so I think that d1 is the only sensible square for the bishop. Choosing the elephant to be a restricted bishop is not very clever either.
Pawns always promote to councellor or bishop at the eighth rank. *You can choose a long range piece or a mating force. Fair enough, but it wouldn't be my choice.*
Castling is very peculiar indeed. Follow carefully.
(1) At one move the king moves to h1: at some later move the king is moved to j1 and the rook simultaneously to i1.
(2) At one move the rook moves to k1: at some later move the king is moved to i1 and the rook simultaneously to j1.
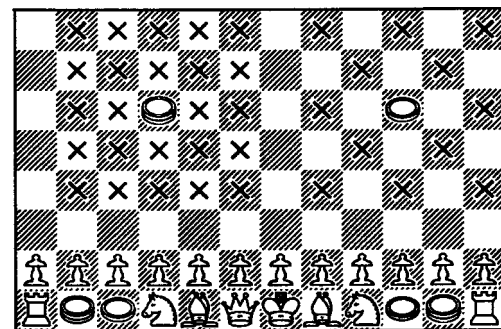
I demonstrate each stage of these two forms of castling in the next diagram, giving method (2) to Black.
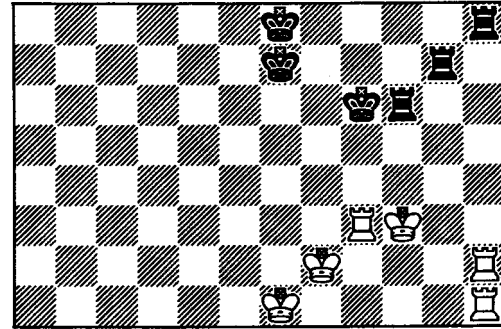
There is no mention of castling on the queenside at all.

Kings court

This game was invented by Sidney LeVasseur in 1997. The layout is shown, as before, in the following diagram.

The jester (b1, k1) can move 1 or 2 squares diagonally and change direction after the first to reach the squares shown. I infer that it cannot jump over an intervening square; nor can it return to its take-off square. The unmoved jester does however have the privilege of a leap - from b1-d3, k1-i3, b8-d6 and k8-i6.
The chancellor (c1, j1) covers all the squares in the two closest rings of squares as shown above, but it cannot jump unless it is making one of the knight moves.
Castling is subject to the usual restraints; unmoved pieces, no piece between king and rook and the king cannot castle out of, into or through check. The king moves 1,2,3 or 4 squares towards the rook and the rook comes to the other side of the king and next to it.
King's flight is an optional move available to the king when in check from a chancellor. The king moves two squares in any direction instead of the usual one. I suspect this is a sign that the chancellor is too powerful.
Differences from orthodox Chess: castling; king's flight; chancellor and jester. In this layout the bishop points directly at the opponents rook, which I feel is an undesirable feature.

Part II has been held over to VC38 to make room for the other material that came in. A brief description of Modern Courier Chess preceeds a survey of ideas in the openings.

AVALANCHE

by Ronald Turnbull

In Avalanche Chess, after making your move you must move one of your opponent's pawns one square towards you. The game was invented by Ralph Betza in 1977, and has been played mainly in Italy. Straight away this turns out to be a useful Chess form, indeed a possible lifesaver - for I'm planning a walking tour of the Bernina next Summer, and now know that 'Valanga' is the Italian for Avalanche. (Life is life-long learning: one American chess varier has now discovered that his sewing machine is named after some mountains in Italian-speaking Switzerland.)

The supplementary move is referred to as the 'pawn-push' (though 'pawn-pull' would be more appropriate). If all remaining enemy pawns are blocked then no pawn-push need be made. If the pushed pawn arrives on the promotion rank then its owner immediately promotes it.

The move must be legal - not self-check - before the pawn push; never mind if the subsequent pawn-push blocks or eliminates the check. On the other hand, an unusual rule comes into play if the pawn-push itself delivers check (either directly, or after promotion, or by battery-opening). The player making such a pawn push loses at once by 'Self Mate'. (Note that this is nothing to do with the normal problemists' use of the term Selfmate).

A
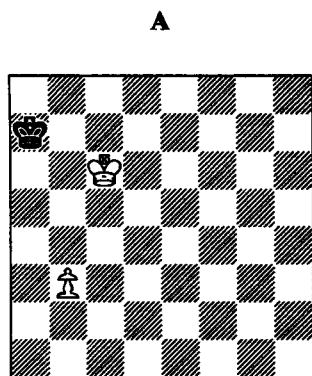
Mate in 2

A simple problem will illustrate. After 1.b4, 1...Ka6(b5) is Self Mate,

so Black plays either

   1...Ka8(b5) 2.Kc7 Ka7(b6) S-M

   1...Kb8(b5) 2.b6 Ka8,c8(b7) S-M

Note that Black is not stalemated in either line as he must play the Self Mating pawn-push. Note also that in the second line, Black can't escape by 2...Ka7(b7) as the first half of the move is illegal.

Why didn't I start the wP on b2 rather than b3? Well, that position would be illegal! Black's previous move must have ended with a push of this pawn...

In 'Scacchi e Scienze Applicate' Antonietta Carminati has written: "AVALANCHE CHESS is especially valuable, psychologically and philosophically speaking: if, as many believe, the game of chess represents life, then Avalanche Chess introduces, moreover, the concept of old age, with the progressive deterioration of one's physical and mental powers that comes about with age."

Quite apart from this useful object lesson in decrepitude, Avalanche lends itself to lively chessplay with short, eventful games and few draws. This ending is from a game Rafaele De Luise/Paul Yearout, with commentary by Paul (Black).

B - De Luise - Yearout
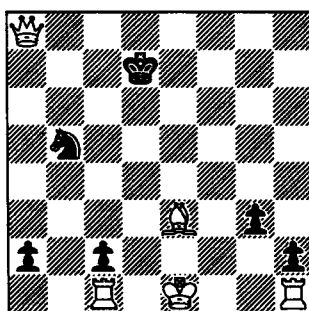
White to play

"I'd let too many pieces go for the sake of the passed pawns. If he had moved 1.Qg2(a1Q) I would have resigned. Even better would be 1.Qb7+(g2) followed by 2.Qxg2(a1Q).

But he chose 1.Rxh2(g2) and the game ended 1...g1Q+ 2.Bxg1(a1Q) Qxc1+ 3.Kf2 Qe3+ 4.Kg2(c1Q) Qcxg1 mate. Fairly typical Avalanche reversal and ending."

As an example of the sudden and shocking nature of the Avalanche, we notice that the lifetime of the Fool is reduced to a single move: 1.g4(e6) Qh5(f3) mate. To eliminate this brutal element from the opening, Castelli's Avalanche exchanges initial positions of bQ and bK; while Balanced Avalanche evens the game by removing the pawn push on White's opening move.

Opening theory? It is, Paul Yearout suggests, a good idea to hold back with the pawns, moving them one-square rather than two and blocking them with one's own pieces.

While as a little bit of endgame theory, the problem below suggests that a 7-rank pawn is more powerful than a Queen, and that it's best to let the enemy make the promotions... Note how the unpromoted h7 pawn threatens Self Mate anywhere within three squares of h8. Remove bP and let white play 1.Kd6 - now Black is forced to Self Mate.

C - RT
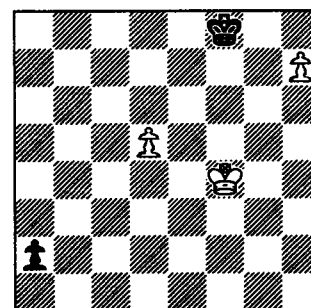
Mate in 3

1.d6(a1Q). Black, with Q and K against two pawns, is seriously behind on material! Q- (d7) leads to 2.h8Q or d8Q with Self Mate by the other pawn. The main line is
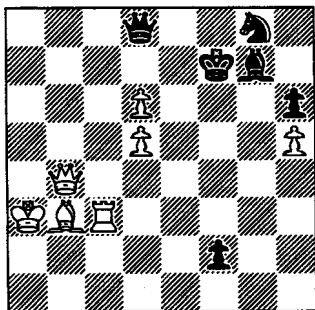
   1.d6(a1Q) Qh8(d7) and let Black promote it:

   2.Kg5 Kg7(d8Q) 3.Qg8+ Qxg8 S-M

   Also 1...Kg7(d7) 2.h8Q+ Kg6(d8Q) 3.Qe8

The Italian journal quoted above (S&SA) has offered substantial cash prizes for Avalanche problems, without great result. The example below (next page) was the sole sound entry for SSA 1996:

D - Paul YEAROUT
S&SA 1996

Mate in 2

1.Rf3+(f1Q,N) and Black inter-poses or moves K with (d7); now 2.Qe7+ and Black Self Mates various-ly with d5-pawn, by battery opening, or by N or Q promotion on d8.

If problemists have been less than overwhelmed by the Avalanche this may be due to a lack of understanding of the rules, which are not what we would expect them to be. So here they are, as formulated by AISE (Asso-ciazione Italiana Scacchi Eterodossi) and published in S&SA in 1995:

1 The rules of orthodox chess are valid except when explicitly specified in the following paragraphs.

2 Starting at first move, each move consists of two parts:

　a) a normal legal chess move;

　b) pushing an enemy pawn one square towards you, no two square or diagonal (capture) pushes.

Since a) must be legal, you can't wait for b) to parry a check.

3 b) is mandatory if there is any unblocked pawn.

4 If the only available pawn-pushes put you in check, you must make one; and you lose, even if you mated in part a). The owner of a pawn that is pushed to its 8th rank decides how it promotes.

5 No en passant capture.

6 If either half-move is illegal, the whole move is replaced.

Problemists may object: it is normal practice elsewhere (Circe, Madrasi, etc) that check is only assessed subject to Fairy restrictions and after a move is complete rather than half way through. However, these rules are self-consistent and amusing. Well, they've amused me...
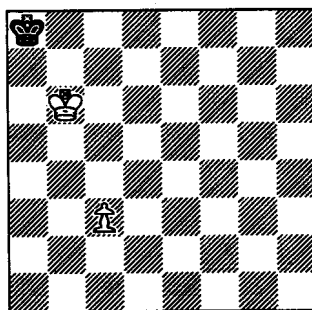
E - RT
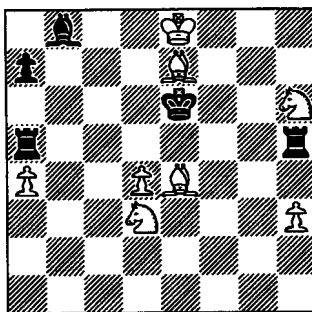
Mate in 2

1.h4(a6) threatens 2.Nf4+ Bxf4(d5) S-M.

　1...Rad5(a5) 2.Nc5 Rxc5(d5) S-M
　1...Rhd5(h5) 2.Bf5 Rxf5(d5) S-M

I chose the keymove to set up both Rook-enclosures but Paul Yearout correctly points out that this is a 'strong' key as blocking one's own pawns is standard Avalanche.

F

Mate in 2

Though the next diagram may annoy rather than amuse... Rushing forward with the pawn is the only possibility, but White can't get anywhere with 1.c4 Kb8(c5) 2.c6.

Ah, but it's not White's move! Retractions start with a pawn-unpush: so retract (c2)bKb8 - with an uncaptured White unit X appearing on a8. Now Black needs a wP to unpush at the start of his next retraction. Can't unpush X to Pa7 without self-check. So White must unpromote X. Unpro-moting X to Pa7 leaves Black in Self Mate, while unpromoting with uncap-ture to b7 doesn't supply any unpush.

With Black to move, then, we have
0...Kb8(c4)
　1.c5 Ka8(c6) 2.Ka6 Kb8(c7) S-M

1... Kc8(c6) 2.c7 Kd7(c8Q) S-M - in each case, Black to play at move 2 would be compelled to Self Mate, but White must find a waiting move. As an exercise: supposing it were White's move, how could he mate in three?

In Fairy Chess, problemists can always find a quibble. (Does the same apply to Ortho-chess, and players? Not for me to say...) The rules above don't determine whether a Self Mating pawn push is generally legal - in Diagram **A** above, may Black play the self defeating 1...Ka6(b5) S-M? And suppose a pawn-push promotes to deliver Self Mate: may its owner choose to underpromote - in Diagram **F**, could White obligingly select 2...Kd7(c8R)? These don't matter to players, who in general strive to win and avoid losing in any quick and obvious way. But they make a difference to the legality of some positions, and also to problem forms such as helpmate and (problem-meaning) selfmate.

On the spreading chestnut-tree of a website www.chessvariants.com, the rules have been rephrased to allow both these. There also two games (alas, without commentary apart from !!shrieks) of Balanced and one of Castelli's Avalanche.

Finally, a diagram familiar to readers of *VC* Problem Pages, where it counts as an original for solving. This, the Vielvater problem, has over 1000 stipulations for the one diagram. Peter Fayers dedicates this one to Robert Durvall, who by adding the stipulation "Who wins?" set in motion the multi-plication of stipulations. In Avalanche we ask again that same question.

G - Peter FAYERS
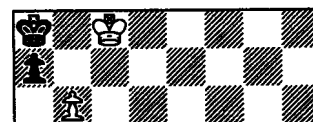
Who wins?

There will be (if I can get it sound) another Avalanche original on the Problem Pages.

Diagram **F** with White to move:
1.Ka6 Kb8(c4) 2.Kb6 Ka8,c8(c5) 3.c6 and Self Mate.

PROBLEM PAGES

by Ronald Turnbull

The Problemist Supplement announces MAR40: MARk Ridley's 40th birthday tourney for problems with MARine pieces.

The tourney is for problems with any stipulation involving the Marine men Siren Triton Nereid which move as Q/R/B but capture by hopping to the vacant square beyond the victim (so that SI captures as Locust). Marine supermen (Seaserpent, Scylla, Charybdis, Squid, Prawn etc) may also be used. Up to one fairy condition (eg Circe, Marine Sentinels) but no non-aquatic fairy pieces.

The judge will be Mark Ridley of the BCVS. There is a prize fund. Further examples, and details of existing supermarine pieces, will be in the March issue of *The Problemist Supplement*, on www.bstephen.freeuk.com, or send SAE to the controller, who is myself. Closing date 30.11.01. And here's an example to get you started...

RT - Original
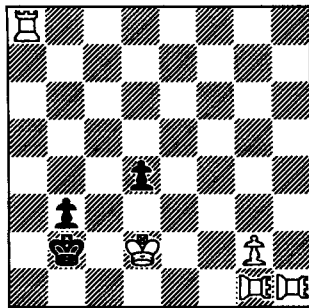
Mate in 3, Tritons

The two Tritons move like Rooks; and if g2 were Black pawn, White could play 1.TRxg2-g3 (the Triton on g1 captures g2 but finishes its move on g3). 1.TRb1 isn't mate because it isn't check, as b3 is occupied. White could mate by 1.TRh2 2.g3 3.Kxd3, but Black gets stalemated at move 2. Solution at the end of the page.

Apart from the usual wierd and difficult beast to finish you off at the end, the originals are all fairly straightforward. Only one fairy form at a time, and even a couple of directmates. Thanks to composers who have sent the stuff that I enjoy.

334 - Paul BYWAY
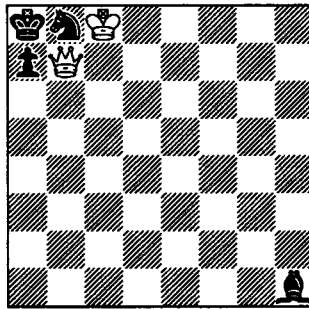
Mate in 2, Chinese pieces

334 can't actually be described as 'fairly straightforward' as it's easier than that. *CHINESE pieces Leo, Pao, Vao move like their orthodox counterparts Q,R,B but capture only beyond some intervening piece. The MAO (Chinese Knight) moves to the same squares as an orthodox knight but in two little steps, orthogonal then diagonal, and so may be obstructed by a piece on the intervening square.* So, here, the Mao is immobile but if 1.LEa6+ MAxa6. The pawn here is also Chinese and lacks the double-square initial move of the Western one.

335 - Alex ETTINGER and RT
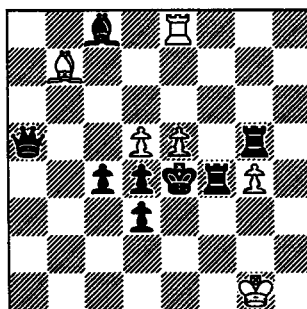
Helpmate in 2, Circe, 2 solutions

My contribution to **335** was the bQ and consequent dual avoidance. *CIRCE: a captured unit is reborn on the appropriate game array square. Captured RBS (which have two possible game-array squares) and B are reborn on game-array square of same colour as square of capture. Captured P on game-array square of same file. Reborn fairy piece is reborn on the promotion-square, file of capture. If the square is occupied the captured piece disappears as in normal chess. Kings, however, are not reborn (except in KING CIRCE).* bQ/bS/bP/ bG/wP captured on a2 reborn on d8/g8/a7/a1/removed as a2 occupied. Reborn R is considered unmoved for castling.
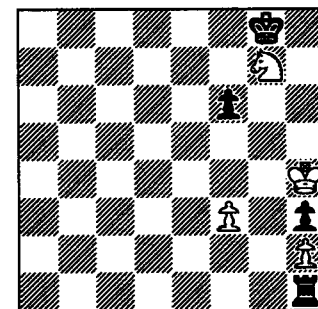
336 - John RICE
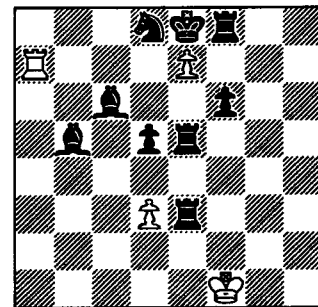
Helpmate in 2, Andernach, 2 sols

337 - Luigi VITALE
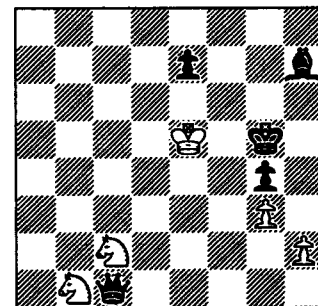
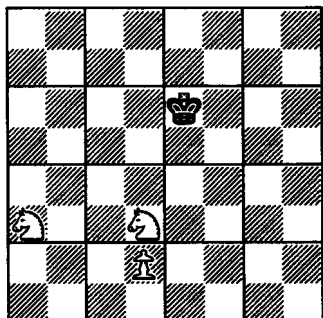Helpmate in 2, Andernach, 2 sols

338 - Luigi VITALE

Helpstalemate in 3, Andernach, 2 sols

And as it's a new year, we'll also define *ANDERNACH: a unit that captures changes colour. Kings are*

excluded. A rook thus created on its home square is considered unmoved for castling. Thus in **336** 1.Rxe7 is illegal self-check as the captor becomes a white Rook.
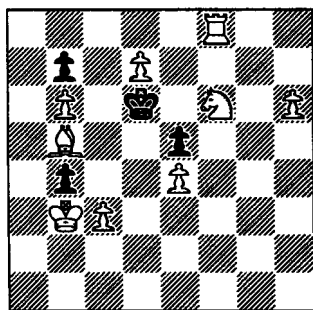
339 - Ian RICHARDSON

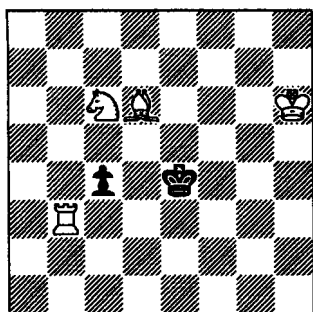Helpstalemate in 2, Grid, b) wNa3>d5

GRID CHESS: every move must cross at least one of the grid lines (assuming the poor editor has managed to get the grid lines onto the diagram.) Every Knight-move crosses a grid-line, so Ns move and give check as in orthodox.

340 - RT

Mate in 2, Avalanche

341 - Ian RICHARDSON

Seriesmate in 18, Magnetic, moving only wN

340 accompanies the Avalanche article elsewhere in the magazine, where a definition of the condition will be found. And *MAGNETIC CHESS? A unit (piece or pawn) that moves influences other units on the same rank and file as the arrival square. If the closest unit is enemy, it is attracted to the square next to the arrival square. If the closest unit is friendly, it is repelled to the square next to some other unit or else to the board edge.*

Kings neither magnetise nor are magnetised. A pawn repelled to promotion rank promotes. The power of a pawn repelled to the home rank has yet to be determined (!) Check is not assessed until everything has settled down. In **341**, only the wN may be moved, though other pieces may shift around magnetically. It is a seriesmover: wN moves 18 times, not giving check until the final move, which checkmates. Clearly the N, on light-square after 18 moves, isn't doing the deed himself.

And the Triton solution: well, we have to avoid stalemate. 1.TRa1 (obviously, that's what the square a1 is for) d3 2.TRhc1 gives bK a flight-square b1: neither Triton can capture because of the other. 2...Kb1 3.TRc2# (not TRa2 Ka1!)

SOLUTIONS *VC36*

Solvers: Mark Ridley, Alex Ettinger, CC Lytton, Luigi Vitale, Ian Richardson, Stephen Emmerson

322 (Richardson) 2.Bd3 6.Ka4 7.Bb5 Ra2 and 2.Be2 6.Kh5 7.Bg4 Rh2. B-shields unite two solutions, and quirkily different mates are better than an echo - RT. bB blocks once from in front, once from behind! - AE. Nice discovery - CCL.

323 (Vitale) 1.cbR Bc4 2.Ra4 Nc2 and 1.wKd4 baQ+ 2.Kc3 Qd3 b) 1.cbS Sc2+ 2.Ka2 Be6 and 1.wKg5 baQ 2.Kh4 Qg4. Shame wK had to move, and that baQ repeated: otherwise a fine bag of promotions - RT. Last solution has a nice dual avoidance 1...cbQ? 3.B*Q! - AE (who also points out that conquering Ks do not get reborn). Wot no AUW? - CCL.

324 (Ettinger) 1.Ne2 (2.e4) Qe4/Re4/Be4/ Se4/e4

2.Qc4/Sf4/Be6/Sc3/Re5,   1...Ke2 2.Bf3. 1.Se4? f6! 1.Re6? d6! h5 prevents extraneous try 1.Nh5. Good key and striking intensity RT. Compliments to the Author! - LV. Neat flight-giving key, with self-blocks on the flight. But the Be4 line doesn't fit - SE.

325 (Emmerson) 1.Be1 Bc1 2.Rd2 Rf2 3.Ke3 Rd4 and 1.Be1 Bg1 2.Rf2 Rf4+ 3.Ke3 Rd2. I'd have dropped the shared half-move, even if it does ensure all units move during play - RT. Slightly too symmetrical - All solvers. Difficult, though - CCL.

326 (Lytton) 1.Bd8 Rb7 2.Ra7 Re7 3.Rd7 Rc7 b) 1.Be1 Rf2 2.Re2 Rb2 3.Ke3 Rd2 and 1.Rb2 Rb6 2.Rb5 Rb2 3.Kc5 Rb4. Composer apologised for the twinning, but it's a small price for 3 perfect solutions - RT. A problem for the FIDE Album! - LV. Amazed that such restricted material can lead to so much variety - IR. Puts me to shame for not managing a bona fide 2-solution setting - SE.

327 (Richardson) 1.Ke3 Kc5 2.e5 Kb4 3.Kd4 Nf5 b) 1.Kc5 Ke3 2.e5 Kd2 3.Kd4 Ne6. Three K-switchbacks, all to ensure no magnetic effects whatever - RT.

328 (Emmerson) 1...Kc7 2.Ka6 ba and 1...bKa6 2.ba Ka8. The second was very hard to find! - AE. Very nice; clean stipulation, better than many with this diagram - CCL. How much more can Stephen find from this position? - MR (but see below).

329 (Emmerson) Set 1...Kc7 2.Ka6 Kc8(bPc7) 3.Ka8(wPa6) b7; 1.a6 2.Ka7; 1.ab Kd7 2.Kb7 Kd6(bPd7) 3.Ka7(wPb7) b8Q. SE admits these two computer-generated - but a nice fairy mate - RT. Unsolved and I don't think SE deserves composer's solving-points either. Some of my favourite fairies - IR, who did well to get the set play.

330 (Vitale) 1.Kb7 Kd4 2.Kc7 Kc5 3.Kd7 Kc4 4.Kc6 d5 and 1.wKd4 etc. Enjoyable, and easier than it looks; but symmetric duplex adds little - RT. Seen before - AE. CCL quotes the Duke of Plaza Toro: "he led his regiment from behind, he found it less exciting".

331 (Fayers) a) Messigny Bichrome-Chess - moves but not swaps must change square-colour - 1.Kg2 K<>K.

Bichrome Messigny-Chess 1.K◇K Kg2 (2.K◇K now not allowed). Reciprocal stipulations lead to reciprocal change. Amusing - MR. Stipulation-swap induces move-swap - RT. Easy but piquant - CCL.

332 (Fayers) a) 1.CCg5 CCg6 2.CCxa7 d7 b) 1.CCRc1 cb 2.CCRxa7 CCRc2 - 'Chinese Camel' can be obstructed on (01) or (02) squares of its (13) move. 'Chinese Rider' captures only beyond some obstructing hurdle. PF has achieved c) Chinese Chinese Camel Riders - but only with Berolina Pawns to help him. Most of us play with board and pieces, PF plays with the stipulation - RT. Another where the play on words had me laughing - MR. Some people just want to keep ahead of us programmers - SE. I like the way order of W moves is fixed in a), and Umnov in b) - AE. Indeed, "silly" problems are all the better for some real problem content. CCL supposed CCR obstructed on (11) rather than (02), but cooked a) 2.CCb8 abQ.

333 (Raican) 1.d8N(h8) Kg1(g8) 2.Qb7(h8) Kf1(g8) 3.Rf8(h8)+ Ke1(g8) 4.Qc7(h8) Kd1(g8) 5.Qd7(h8)+ Kc1(g8) 6.Qe7(h8) Kb1(g8) 7.Qf7(h8) Ka1(g8) 8.Qg6(h7) Ka2(h8) 9.Rf1(h1) Ka3(h2) 10.Qg5(h1) Ka4(h2) 11.Qg4(h1) Ka5(h2) 12.Qg3(h1) Ka6(h2) 13.Qf2(g1) Kb7(h2) 14.Qa7(c7)+++ Kxb8(c8). Took 10mins just to understand the final move - RT. Again, not such a masochist - AE. But 'just for the hell of it' he got Alybadix to find cooks with duals in 13. Incidentally, those who are such masochists should visit Leopold von S-M's website at http://faculty.newschool.edu/~schlemoj/imptopia/sachermasoch.html

Paul Raican corrects his proof game Zvolen Chess **321** (*VC*35): 1.b4 f5 2.b5 f4 3.b6 f3 4.bxc7 fxg2 5.exd8B gxf1N 6.Bxe7 Nxd2 7.Bb4 Bxb4 8.Kf1 g6 9.Kg2 Bc3 10.Kf3 Nf6 11.Ke4 O-O 12.Kd5 Rf7 13.Kc6 Rf8+ 14.Kxb7 Rf7+ 15.Kxa8 Ba6 16.Kb7 Nc6+ 17.Kb6 Rf8+ 18.Kc5 Ra8 19.Qe1 Nb8.

Scores:- MR 3½; AE 9; CCL 10½; LV 5; IR 9; SE 8½

REVIEW

by David Pritchard

Guide des échecs exotiques et insolites, *by Jean-Louis Cazaux*
(Chiron: 224pp: FF148)

This handsome paperback offers the reader a selection of some sixty variants clearly presented in a player-friendly format and illustrated with large diagrams. The variants are presented in ten parts (numbers in brackets are the number of games covered in each part):- *ancestors of the orthodox game (3), medieval variants (7), chess in the Far East (6), variants of Asiatic chess (7), new dimensions for the chessboard (7), progression towards the fantastic (8), military variants (3), geometric variants (6), the third dimension (3), on the frontiers of chess (8).*

I noticed three games that are not in the *ECV*: **Chego**, **Klin Zha**, and **Shako**. **Chego**, as its name suggests, is a combination of chess and go. It was invented by Alfred Pfeiffer in 1997. **Klin Zha** is a game from Star Trek played on a triangular board with nine pieces a side. Much closer to chess is **Shako** (Esperanto: 'chess') invented by the author. Board 10x10; 22 men a side. Orthodox chessmen plus two elephants, two cannons and two pawns extra a side. Starting position: a1-j1/a10-j10; C———C: a2-j2/a9-j9; ERNBQKBNRE: a3-j3/a8-j8; 10xP. The cannon is the same piece as the cannon in XiangQi. The elephant differs from its XiangQi counterpart in that it can move one or two squares diagonally but can leap the first square only if it is occupied. Its movement is not restricted. The rules given for **Stratomic** are those in the *ECV* and not the updated rules *(VC35, p38).*

A working knowledge of French is necessary to enjoy the book which is good value thanks to the strong pound. It can be obtained from **Galignani, 224 rue de Rivoli, Paris 75001.** The shop accepts all credit cards.

from John Beasley

A first survey of Losing Chess endgame material to the end of 1999. Further copies are available from myself without charge. If you already have a provisional version of this document, please note the following points.

(1) Some important items from German sources have been added, courtesy of Ralf Binnewirtz and Jörg Kuhlmann.

(2) A large amount of Internet material has been added, courtesy of Fabrice Liardet.

(3) The treatment of the Slater-Klüver correspondence has been recast to refer to original sources, courtesy of Ralf Binnewirtz and David Pritchard.

(4) The treatment of Magari 1978 has been corrected, courtesy of Chris Feather.

There are also a number of minor changes, additions and corrections. While this document has been awaiting distribution, Ralf Binnewirtz has published a book.

REVIEW

Schlagabtausch im Räuberschach contains some 150 Losing Chess compositions from 1901 up to mid-2000. This is a beautifully produced book with all compositions in diagram form (144 A5 pages, soft cover, around 150 diagrams, text in German). Each of us supplied the other with a provisional version of his material and much of his coverage is very similar to my own, but even where we both quote a composition there are occasional details which one of us gives but not the other. Being a book of compositions, his book normally omits theoretical summaries and examples illustrating basic endgame theory, so my coverage of endgame material is a little more complete than his, but he includes fairy and retro compositions which I have usually regarded as being outside my terms of reference. Ralf tells me that the book is available from:-
Schachhaus Mädler, Wägnerstrasse 5, D-01309 Dresden, Germany.
e-mail:-
Schachhaus.Maedler@t-online.de
at a price of DEM 24.80 including postage. It is an excellent piece of work, and I have no hesitation in saying that all serious Losing Chess enthusiasts should obtain a copy.
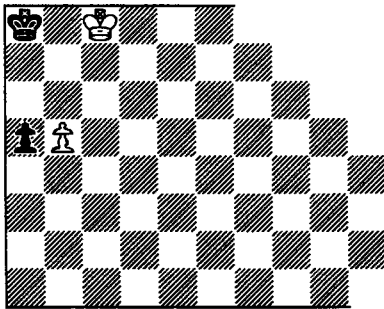
THE END IS NIGH

by Paul Byway

We start with 3 originals. In the first the one diagram has 2 solutions. Why? The second is a pioneering look at the quirks of the Circular Chess endgame.

#90 Paul Byway
Original

Courier Game
Mate in 8, (b) Mate in 2

#91 John Beasley
Original

Circular Chess
White to play and win

#92 John Beasley
Original

Losing Chess
White to play and win

For the next two I have revised earlier studies, throwing away the dross but keeping the nugget within. The solutions are too short, but on balance I think this is the better option.

#93 Paul Byway
Revision of VC18 #4
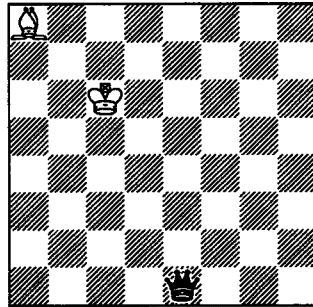
Losing Chess
White to play and draw

#94 Paul Byway
Revision of VC27 #35

Losing Chess
White to play and win

In the following interesting problem, one of the longest of its type, Black has the full complement of men. The second diagram may give a clue to the solution.

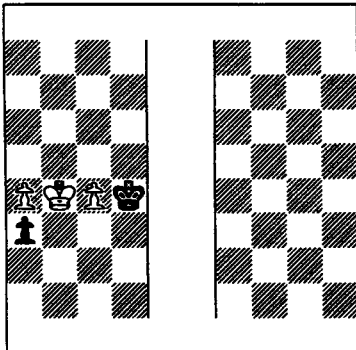*M and R Tomasevich*

White to play and mate in 128

All the moves are made by White, without reply, but he must not move into check nor give check before the final move. At move 119 it reduces to the following problem in Italian Progressive Chess.

Progressive Chess

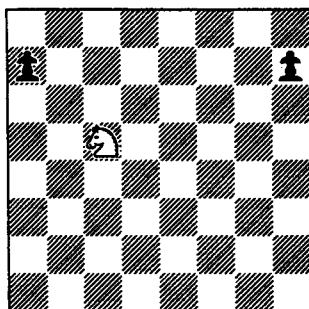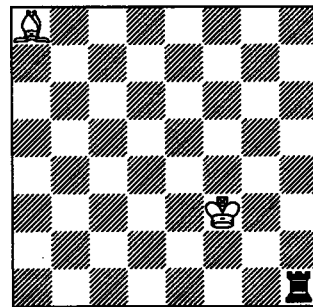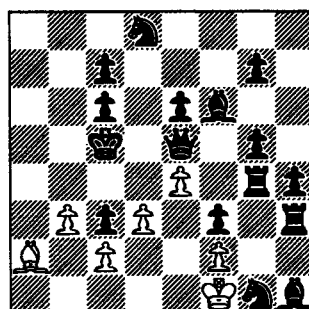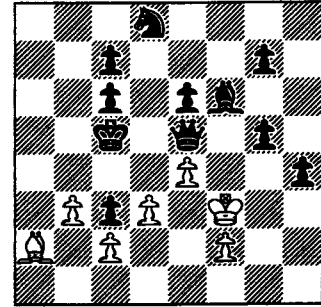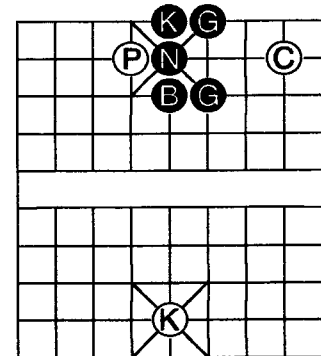*White to play and mate in 9*

from the booklet
Special topic: Cannon + Pawn
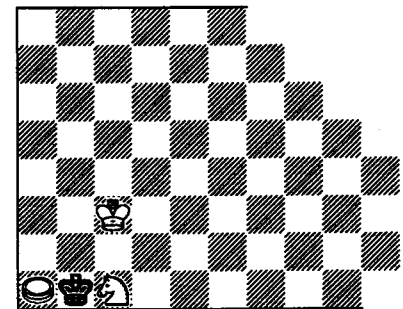
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

XiangQi: Mate in four

Solutions are on the next page. Now 2 of the MCC positions listed in *VC36*.

Vaclav Kotesovec
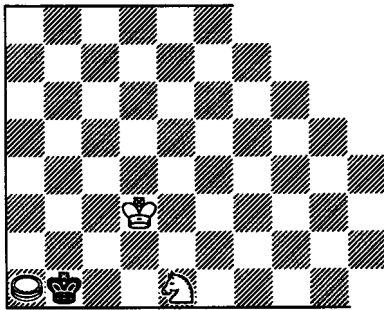*Extracted from database*

Modern Courier Chess
Mate in 10

I find the following mating method:-
1.Nb3 Ka2 2.Cc1 Kb1 3.Ce3 Ka2
4.Cc5 Kb1 5.Ca5 Ka2 6.Nc5 Kb1
7.Nd3 Ka2 8.Kc2 Ka1 9.Cc3+ Ka2
10.Nc1 mate.
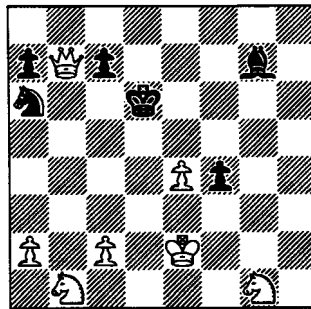
And now a solution to the mate in 11:-

Vaclav Kotesovec
Extracted from database
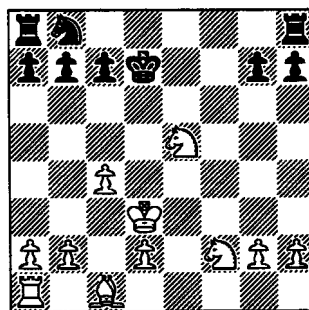
Modern Courier Chess
Mate in 11

1.Cc3 Kb2 2.Kc4 Ka2 3.Kb4 Kb1
4.Ce3 Kb2 5.Ka4 Ka2 6.Nd3 Kb1
7.Kb3 Ka1 8.Kc2 Ka2 9.Cc5 Ka1
10.Cc3+ Ka2 11.Nc1 mate.
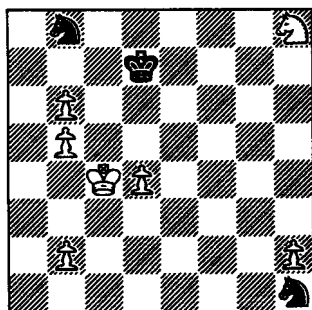
SOLUTIONS TO COMPETITION 12

#87 6.Ka8, 7.c4, 9.b5 Italian mate
#88 Four solutions; only Fred Galvin
     found more than one of them.
  (a) 3.Kf4, 4.Nb3, 6.axb5, 8.Re3
  (b) 2.Kd5, 5.Rxc2, 6.f4, 8.c4
  (c) 2.Kd5, 5.Rxc2, 6.f4, 8.Nb4
  (d) 1.Kg7, 2.Re8, 3.Nxb5, 8.Qd5
#89 3.Nxd4, 4.0-0, 5.Rd8, 8.Rc2

COMPETITION 13

#95 Castelli - Gatto (1980)
(colours reversed)

Mate in 10

#96 Minasso - Dulcich (1985)

Mate in 10

#97 Cesaro - Viola (1989)

Mate in 8

CURRENT SCORES

Ian Richardson	38
Fred Galvin	34
David Pritchard	21
Ronald Turnbull	13
Cedric Lytton	6
John Beasley	3
Stefano Bruzzi	2

SOLUTIONS

#90 Let's see what *Murray* has to say about pawn promotion in the **Courier Game**: "a pawn on reaching the 8th row has to make 3 'Freudensprünge' to the 6th, 4th, and 2nd rows on the same file before it can receive promotion. It then becomes a queen *(i.e. a fers)* only. It can neither take nor leap over a piece during the 'Freudensprünge'. It is immune from capture while on the 8th row, but not during its leaps back to its original square, which need not be in consecutive moves". The solution therefore goes as follows:
1.b6 a4 2.Kc7 a3 3.Kc8 a2 4.Kc7 a1 5.Kc8 a3 6.Kc7 a5 7.Kc8 a7(F)

8.b7 mate. In (b) the pawn is already on its way back. This one is inspired by (and could be presented as) the Vieler Väter problem that has been featured in the *Problem Pages*.

#91 For *at-a-glance* simplicity the notation pretends that this is a conventional board. 1.Kb3 (1.Kxa3? Kxc4 and Black draws because White is in zugzwang and must cede his pawn.) a2 (1. ..Kc5 2.a5 etc. wins) 2.Kxa2 Kxc4 3.Ka3 and this time it is Black who is in zugzwang.

#92 This is a doubled version of the study Nd3 v. Pa7,h7 in VC26. An exclamation mark indicates the only move. 1.Nd7! with two variations:
(a) 1. ..a5 2.Ne5! h6 3.Nd3! a4 4.Nc1 (logically simplest) a3 5.Nd3 a2 6.Nc1 a1(B) (if ...h5 7.Nxa2 and 10.Ng1) 7.Na2 Bc3 8.Nxc3 and 10.Ng3
(b) 1. ..a6 2.Ne5! h6 3.Nf3 (logically simplest, leading to an echo of the preceding line; several moves win from here on, but all have the property that this time the h-pawn must be made to run.) h5 4.Nh2 h4 5.Nf1 with an echo of the position after 3. a4 4.Nc1.

#93 **1.Bb7! Qh4! 2.Ba8! Qe1! 3.Bb7!** with a draw by repetition: the electronic oracle reveals that this is the only such draw with this material.

#94 **1.Bd5!** (1.Bb7(c6) Rh8 wins) **Rh8** (nothing better) **2.Bg8! Rxg8 3.Kg~ wins.**

Problem: White cannot mate without guarding d6, b6 and b5 - and his king alone is not up to the task. Now b4 or d4 cannot be played until the final move so he must free the f-pawn, but Kxf3 is impossible until all the guards have been removed. That takes us up to 119.Kxf3 and the second diagram. The solution to this runs: 120.Ke3 121.f4 122.f5 123.fxe6 124.e7 125.exd8=Q 126.Qxc7 127.Qb8 128.b4 mate.

XiangQi Problem: Red starts by freezing the Black position. 1.C2=4 B5+7 2.K5+1 with two lines:
(a) 2. ...B7-9 3.C4=2 B9+7 4.C2+1
(b) 2. ...B7-5 3.K5=6 B5+7 4.P6+1

SOME HOSTAGE CHESS DEFEATS

by John Leslie

After indulging myself in the last article, here are two games in which Roger Smook gets his revenge. Reminder: Hostage exchanges, which can never be refused, are always for men of equal or lesser value (bishop equals knight). (Q–B)B*d6 means an imprisoned (or 'hostage') queen goes to the enemy airfield (near the enemy's left hand) in exchange for a bishop which, taken from the enemy's prison, is then dropped (parachuted) immediately as the rules demand, in this case onto d6. In contrast, B*d6 (or *d6) mean simply that a bishop (or a pawn) from an airfield drops onto d6.

White **J.L.** vs. *Black* **R.S.** 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bc4 Be7 4.d4 exd4 5.Qxd4 (P–P)*e5?
6.Qd5 Be6 7.Qxb7 Bxc4 8.Qxa8 Nf6 9.*d3 Be6 10.Qxa7 O–O 11.Bg5 Nh5 12.Bxe7 Qxe7 13.(B–B)B*b6 Nc6 14.Qxc7 Qxc7 15.Bxc7 (Q–Q)Q*c1+
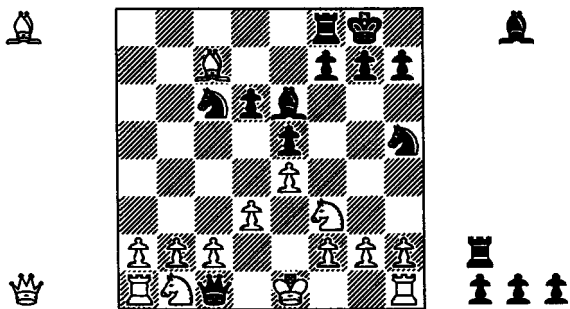
By provoking the exchange of hostage queens, his opponent then getting the first opportunity to drop a queen, White has given Black a chance to recover from his poor opening. 16.Q*d1 B*b4+ 17.Nd2 Qxd1
18.Kxd1 Nf4 19.Re1 (guards against (Q–Q)Q*e2) 19. ..Bxd2 20.Kxd2 Nd4 21.Nxd4 exd4
22.Bxd6 (B–B)B*a5+ 23.B*b4 (N–P)*c3+ (a sacrifice to expose White's king) 24.bxc3 dxc3+
25.Bxc3 Bxc3+ 26.Kxc3 (N–N)N*b5+ 27.Kb4 Nxd6 28.N*e7+ Kh8 (White's attack has simply wasted a knight drop which might have helped defend his unhappy king) 29.Kc3 (P–P)*b4+ 30.Kd2 Nc4+ (more sacrificial expertise) 31.dxc4 (Q–Q)Q*c3+ 32.Kd1 (B–N)N*b2+ 33.Kc1 N(b)d3+ 34.Kd1 Nxf2+ 35.Kc1 N(4)d3+ 36.Kb1 Qb2 mate
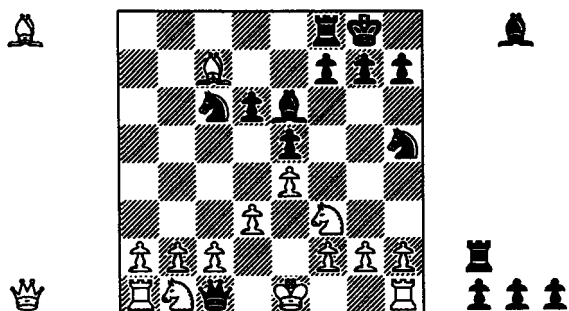
The next game is particularly instructive in its final moves.

White **J.L.** vs. *Black* **R.S.** 1.d4 Nf6
2.Nc3 d5 3.Bg5 Bf5 4.Bxf6 exf6 5.e3 Nc6 6.Bb5 a6
7.Bxc6+ bxc6 8.(N–B)B*b7 N*b4
9.Bxa8 Qxa8 10.(N–B)B*d3 Nxd3 11.cxd3 Bb4 12.a3 Bxc3 13.bxc3 (B–B)B*b2 14.Rb1 Bxc3+
15.B*d2 N*b2 16.Rxb2 Bxb2 17.(N–N)N*d6+ (Black cannot capture the knight without losing his queen through (N–N)N*c7+) 17. ..Kd7 18.Nxf5 (R–R)R*a1+ 19.(B–B)B*c1 Bxc1
20.Bxc1 N*b2 21.cxb2 Rxd1+ 22.Kxd1 B*g4+ 23.Nf3 Bxc5 24.(B–N)N*c5+ Ke7 25.Ke2 Rb8 26.R*b3 Rxb3 27.Nxb3 Qb8 28.(N–B)B*b4+ B*d6 29.Nc5 a5 30.B(4)c3 Bxc5 31.dxc5 Bxd3+
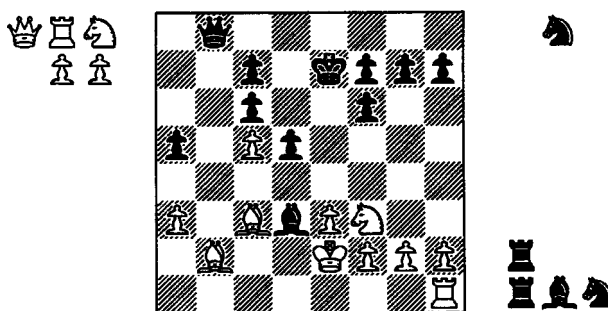
(a fine sacrifice initiating a mating attack) 32.Kxd3 Qb5+ 33.Kd2 (R–R)R*e2+ 34.Kc1 Qxb2+
(when you have captured the enemy queen, your own queen can then often rampage freely, its capture being fatal to your opponent — as in this instance) 35.Bxb2 (Q–Q)Q*c2 mate

In the third game, David Pritchard kills me quickly, Shogi-style, with eight successive checks.

White **J.L.** *Black* **D.P.** 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Bc5 4.Bb5 Nd4 5.Nxe5 Qe7 6.Nxf7 Kxf7 7.Bc4+ Kf8 8.d3 g6 9.Bxg8 Rxg8 10.Ne2 (N–N)N*f3+ 11.gxf3 Nxf3+ 12.Kf1 Qh4 13.(P–P)*g3 Qh5 14.N*f4 Nxh2+ 15.Kg1 (B–N)N*f3+ (after this second knight drop, White's king is plainly in trouble) 16.Kg2 *h3+ 17.Nxh3 Qxh3+ (Black goes for the throat, caring little about losing his queen)
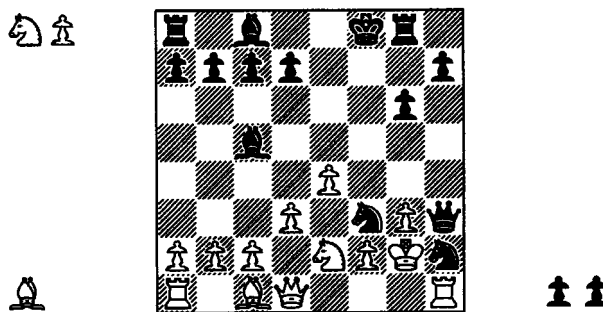
18.Kxh3 d5+ 19.(P–P)*f5 Bxf5+ (a sacrifice to get a droppable bishop) 20.exf5 *g4+ 21.Kg2 (N–B)B*h3 mate

BCVS NOTICES

The **AGM** will be held at **Badgers Wood, Munstead, Godalming, Surrey**, on **Saturday June 30**. The meeting proper will start at **1130**, and the usual **rapid-play tournament** will be held in the afternoon. UK members will find a formal notice with this issue of *VC*. Any member abroad who is visiting the UK and wishes to attend will also be welcome.

The society's officers will be meeting immediately after the AGM to discuss the acquisitions policy for the **Library**, and would welcome guidance from members. In particular, should we assign the librarian a regular budget to be spent as he thinks fit, or should we continue to rely on donations and possible *ad hoc* purchases of outstanding items? The British Chess Problem Society gives its librarian an annual budget equivalent to between two and three percent of its subscription income, but the BCPS is both larger and longer established than ourselves and its annual subscription is more than twice our own; what is appropriate in its circumstances may not be thought appropriate in ours. Any member having a view on the matter is asked to send it to the secretary in advance of the meeting. (e-mail johnbeasley@mail.com).

Please note that **Fabrice Liardet's web page** can now be found at http://home.worldcom.ch/fliardet and not as notified in VC34.

POSTAL PLAY

Dale Sullins is organizing an **Auction Chess** tournament. Play has already started on the basis of informal approach to likely participants, but 'it would be nice to have a couple more'. Contact him at 4518 Oakland Avenue, Saint Louis, MO 63110, USA, or by e-mail at Dalechess@aol.com.

Several recently joined members are interested in postal play and we are conscious of not giving them the service that we would like. If any member is willing to take on the post of **postal chess organizer**, we shall be very pleased to hear from him. At present the job falls by default on the secretary, but he is not himself a postal player and in practice he is doing little beyond encouraging those interested in organizing particular tournaments to go ahead. If someone is willing to give the job proper attention, our activities in this field will be greatly strengthened.

JOB NOTICES

The March issue of John Beasley's *British Endgame Study News* was accompanied by another special number on endgames in chess variants. As previously, this is being offered free of charge to readers of *VC*, and readers known to be interested should find a copy with this issue. Any whose copy is missing, and any other readers who would like one, please contact John

CIRCULAR CHESS

Readers will be interested in this extract from *CHESSNUTS 2000: World Circular Chess Championships 2001*. In keeping with our historic roots and moving ever closer to matching the rumour of 11th Century monks playing the game in their cells at night, the 2001 championship will be held in the Bishop's Palace adjacent to Lincoln Cathedral. Further details will be announced nearer the time but put it in your diaries for 20 May 2001. If you don't get the details please get in touch. **Rob Stevens, Tel. 01522 532745 (Chessnuttr@AOL.com)**

XIANGQI

Siegfried Huber sent me the English Rating List as of 27JAN2001. He writes:- 'XiangQi INGO ratings will be posted on the homepage of the German XiangQi Association. Only players that have been rated within the last two years are listed. If you have any tournaments you want to be rated, or if you find any mistakes, double listed or missing players, please send mail to:- **Siegfried Huber, German XiangQi Association.** e-mail: **Huber.Siegfried@t-online.de'.**

Elo Rating List (England)

1	Chen Fazuo	2114
2	Young David	2086
3	Guo Shulong	2072
4	La Khanh-Hoa	2002
5	Liu Yu Ming	2002
6	Wang Shunqi	1988
7	Cong Pao Chong	1967
8	Liu Si Hinh	1925
9	Byway Paul	1855
10	Lai Chi Kong	1813
11	Dong Jun	1813
12	Zheng Wen Bin	1547
13	Wu Cai Fang	1414
14	Wood Peter	1393
15	Havery Andrew	1064
	Pisani Frank	1064
17	Lysons John	1064

ORIENTAL CHESS

Here is an idea that has been rolling formlessly around in my head for some time. A recent letter from Robert Reynolds caused my thoughts to crystallise with results we see below. Robert was interested in the use of the Chinese cannon. Quite rightly: it's a fascinating piece. I start with Shatranj, and observe that on a 9x9 board *ferses* and *fils* are exchangable. Now move to a set of XiangQi pieces on a Shogi board. Except for the cannons that's what we have in the diagram.
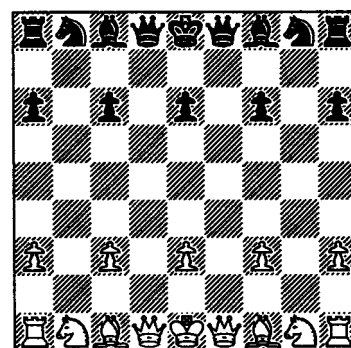
Give the pieces their Chinese moves. Kings can't stand unscreened on the same file. The king, queen and bishop are not restricted in their movements. The pawn moves and captures forwards only, but also sideways in the middle third of the board, and also backwards in the last third. The cannons are kept in hand, to drop in Shogi-style when desired. Only once: there's no reincarnation. Let me know if you try it or can improve it.