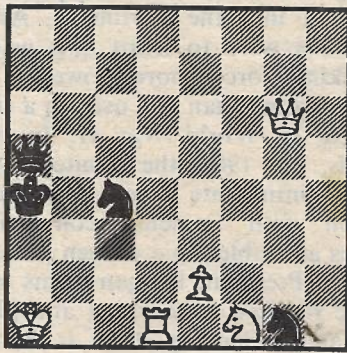


Puzzling

THE ABSTRACT WORLD of chess problems has its own devoted band of studious practitioners, many of whom spend days, weeks or months composing a single position. It is a genuine labour of love; each composition must conform to a rigorous set of regulations, and a single flaw in the analysis might render the entire creation worthless. So complex a task is it that even prize-winning studies are sometimes later refuted, or "cooked", to use the technical jargon.

There are a variety of specialist publications that cater for the keen solver, such as *The Problemist*, a bi-monthly magazine of modest circulation put out by the British Chess Problem Society. Here one will find anything from studies to selfmates, fairies to mutates. I have taken several of the following puzzles from this source.

This first position is a study, which means White has to draw or win, but does not have to do so within a specified number of moves. Have a go at working out how White could conceivably draw here. The more effort expended, the greater will be the appreciation of the fabulous final solution. The composer is V. Pachman.



White to play and draw.

Black's threats against the White king appear overwhelming. For example, the most logical defence, 1.Qc2 ch, fails to 1...Kb4 dis ch 2.Qa2 Qe5 ch 3.Kb1 Na3 ch 4.Kc1 Qc3 ch. Key moves, however, do not always look logical.

1. Rd2! Kb3 dis ch

1...Nxd2. 2.Nxd2 Qxd2 3.Qxg1 is a draw.

2. Kb1 Na3 ch

3. Kc1 Qc3 ch

This looks ominously like curtains for White: 4.Rc2 Qe1 is instant mate and 4.Kd1 Qa1 ch doesn't take much longer. But what alternative is there?

4. Qc2 chl!

An astonishing queen sacrifice.

4. ... Nxc2

5. Rd3! Nxe2 ch

Surely it's now over: 6.Kb1 Qxd3 7.Nd2 ch and by 7...Kb4 Black easily avoids giving stalemate.

6. Kd1!!

The million-dollar move — White allows his rook to be taken with check!

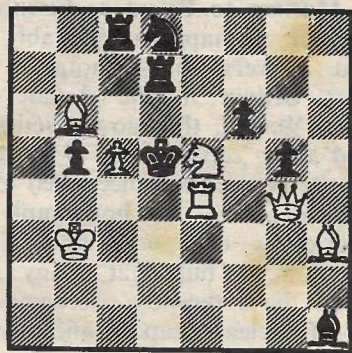
6. ... Qxd3 ch

7. Nd2 ch and draws

If Black moves his king then White is left stalemated. The only other move is 7...Qxd2 ch 8.Kxd2 when Black is left

with two knights against the king — not enough to force mate. Brilliant.

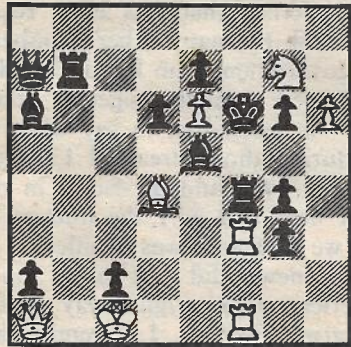
For something a little lighter, try this mate in two. It also contains what is called a "try"; that is, a move with the same idea as the key move, but which narrowly fails. The composer is B. Lender.



White to play and mate in two moves.

The "try" here is 1.Nd3, with the idea of Nb4 mate. The defences 1...Nc6 2.Qe6 mate, 1...Bxe4 2.Qxd7 mate, and so on, all fail but 1...Rxc5 works. So the solution is 1.Nc6! cancelling out this option.

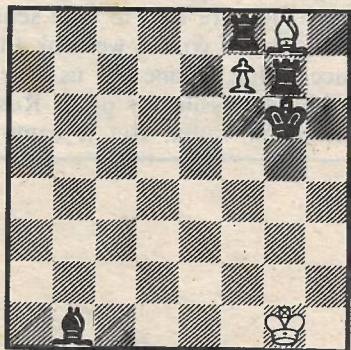
Helpmates, where Black has to help White checkmate him, are the most fun of all. There are two solutions to this one. Remember, Black goes first, White moves, Black moves and then White must deliver mate. The composer is M. Mladenovic.



Helpmate in two moves.

The trick here is to cover Black's flight square g5. So 1...Bxd4 2.Rc3 Bb6 3.Rc5 mate and 1...Rxf3 2Bf2 Rd3 3.Be3 mate.

Here is one final — and difficult! — challenge. Solution next week.



Helpmate in three moves.

Remember, white plays up the board as usual so there is a possibility of pawn promotion. Black moves first and assists White to mate him on White's third turn.

MURRAY CHANDLER