



Studies with Stephenson

I was pleased recently to be sent a copy of a new book *Chess Problems Out of the Box*, by German chess composer Werner Keym. Its subject is unconventional chess compositions, which mainly means those using retrograde analysis to challenge the solver as to which side is to play and what moves are legal from the diagram position.

In ordinary chess problems the solver's challenge is to find the play from the diagram position. With retro problems, the solver's challenge may involve that, but will also be to discover facts about the game leading up to the diagram position. This book introduces this field in all its varieties and complexities and its author is well qualified to be our guide. He is acknowledged as one of the world's leading experts in the genre.

There are three basic things you need to know. By convention, all chess compositions should be legal positions, capable of being reached by a game of chess following the normal rules, however silly that game may have been. Castling is always legal unless it can be proved that it isn't. An *en passant* capture on the first move is only legal if it can be proved that the move leading up to the diagram position was the double-step move of the pawn to be captured. As an example here is an endgame study by Werner himself, as quoted in the book.

Werner Keym *Die Schwalbe*, 1997



White to play and win

Black is all tied up, but he threatens to break out with 1...♖xf8. Can White initiate some checks by taking the c5-pawn *en passant*? Only if we can prove that Pc7-c5 was Black's last move. Let's investigate moves leading up to the position. We can reason something like this:

a) White has all his pawns and therefore there are no promoted white pieces in the diagram.

b) The white pawns have made six captures: axb (of the missing black b-pawn), cxd (of the missing black d-pawn), exf, fxg, gxh and fxg. There are six missing black men, and so the white pawn captures account for all of them.

c) The black pawn on h4 has got there by making three captures – exf, fxg and gxh – and these account for the missing white men.

d) We are told it is White to play, therefore Black must have played last. What could his last move have been? All his kingside pieces are locked in, so they didn't make the last move. This leaves the black king and the two pawns on the queenside.

e) There are four empty squares around the black king. He can't have come from a3, b3 or c3 as that would leave a position of illegal check: there being no previous legal white move that could give that check. The same is actually true of c4. If, before that move, White checked by d2-d3, then how did the (unpromoted) white bishop get to f8? If that check was by d2xc3, then how did the missing and non-capturing black d-pawn get passed the wPd4, which in that case wouldn't itself have made any captures either? So Black's last move was not with his king.

f) This leave the black pawns on the a- and c- files, neither of which, we have discovered, made a capture. So, the choice is between c6-c5 and c7-c5. If it was c6-c5 how would that resulting check have come about? We have already decided that a capturing promotion (e7xf8♙+) is out of the question, so that leaves c7-c5 when the check can easily be explained by a previous move by White of ♖d6-a6+.

g) We have found nothing that makes castling illegal.

And so the *en passant* capture is allowed.

1 bxc6+! ep ♖xf8

1...♙xa4 2 ♖b6 ♖xf8 has transposed to the main line.

2 ♖b6+ ♙xa4 3 0-0!

Threatening mate on a1. Castling is necessary. After 3 ♙f2? the black queen gets into the game with decisive effect with 3...♗xh2+ 4 ♗xh2 hxg3+ 5 ♙xg3 ♖d6+.

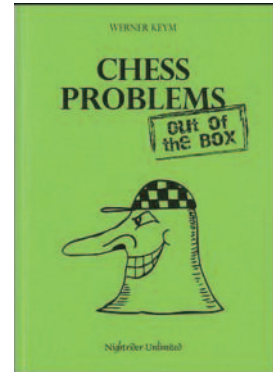
3...♖b4 4 ♗xb4+ axb4 5 ♙g2

And wins. One possibility is **5...hxg3 6 ♙xh3 gxh2 7 ♙xh2 ♙b5 8 c7 ♙c6 9 ♗xf7.**

As is normal with retro problems, the analysis of the moves leading up to the diagram position is more important and more interesting than the forward play.

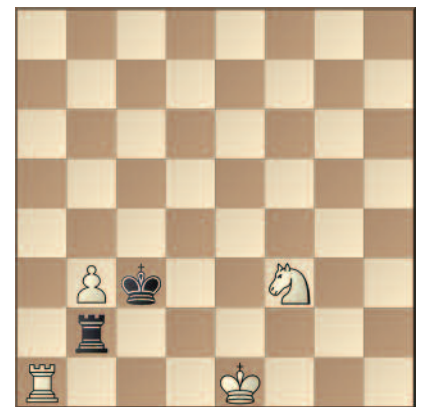
Werner Keym has collected together 500 unconventional chess compositions into this fine book, which I warmly recommend. It is written in English in an explanatory style and I have learned much from it. The volume can

be obtained from the publisher *Nightrider Unlimited* at www.nightrider-unlimited.de.



For you to solve here is another study by Werner, but don't panic: you can assume that there is absolutely no reason why White cannot castle.

Werner Keym *Allgemeine Zeitung Mainz*, 1963 (version)



White to play and win

To enter email matt@chess.co.uk or send your name and address, with the main variations, to Chess & Bridge Ltd., 44 Baker Street, London, W1U 7RT, postmarked no later than 1st October. There is a £25 voucher for the first correct entry drawn.

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