

CHESS

By E. J. CLARKE

Address all communications to Chess Editor, San Francisco Chronicle
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Are Problems and End Games on Higher Plane Than Chess?

The following letter, asserting the superiority of end game studies and problems to the game of chess itself was written by the late W. A. Strohmer of this city some years ago. While it was penned in a playful mood, it no doubt gives "Stroh's" real views. It was called forth by the publication about ten years ago of this end game study: White, 8 pieces; king at QS7, knights at Q4, QR4, bishop at QS3, pawns at QR2, QR6, QS5, QB4. Black—1 piece: King at QS5. Conditions: White to play and, without moving king or pawns, bring all the pieces back to their original squares, with Black to play, whereupon the knight mates. Of course, with Black to play in above position, the knight mates on the move. With the best defense for Black the mate can be accomplished in twenty-seven moves. Strohmer and W. McCracken, now residing in Vacaville, a loyal reader of our present column, by the way, worked many hours trying to find the solution to the problem, until finally "Stroh," in the wee small hours, hit upon the correct line of play. Our version of the subsequent proceedings was to the effect that "Strohmer" was so elated that he aroused McCracken out of bed at 2 a. m. to show him the solution." It was the use of that word "elated" which called forth Strohmer's rather brilliant essay, which should prove entertaining reading:

"Mr. Chess Editor: In the same issue which contains the chess position contributed by William McCracken there is an accompanying note in which it is stated that I was 'elated' when I presented the solution to McCracken. "Now, Mr. Editor, I think it time another classification should be made and that is the superiority of Problems and End Games to the regular game of chess and it is your use of the word 'elated' that is the basis and proof of my contention. When I read that in the paper on Sunday I thought it was most likely a slip of the finger—the linotypers'. I thought it was intended to read 'belated,' for I admit I was a little late. However, when I am called upon to always want to know all about it, so I looked in the dictionary and find out all that 'elated' might mean. Now I am sure that word 'elated' could not be the word for such a feeling may spring from the accomplishment of some ignoble motive or design."

"For example, there is the puglist, as he starts over the prostrate form of his adversary and hears the count of the fatal tenth second—he also is 'elated.' Within him is embodied all the brute instincts of the tiger of the jungle. And down in the depths of Hades, upon the entrance of every lost soul, all accounts agree that Satan is also 'elated'—surely it is a word from the Devil's vocabulary."

"One more example: Is not the chess player the 'scraper' of the chessboard? His moves are but the blows of the puglist, made with the same fell design, to crush his opponent to earth, to render him helpless and when he finally achieves his goal and administers check-mate, he also is 'elated.' And herein is the indictment of the game of chess as a malign influence and the proof, Mr. Editor, that you wrote that word as printed, for you are one of the 'scrapers.'"

"This is evidence to me that you have no conception of the wide gulf between the mental plane of the examples cited above, and that of the End Game and Problem Cult."

"We are cast in a finer and nobler mental mold, and the wellsprings of inspiration are in no wise kindred to those from which they receive theirs. Our contention that we are on a higher plane and imbued with purer motives is not to be discredited as the vapors of an egotistic mind. It has its basis in a well-established science—the science of evolution."

In accordance with the tenets of this science, chess, the game, is merely the crude embryo from which develop by the process of evolution. First, the end games, which embrace the most prolonged stage, through which the intelligent and far-seeing mind can direct moves through the various intricate complications to a certain ultimate checkmate."

Second, the problem phase, which embraces the shorter processes and develops the startling changes brought about through knowledge of the strategic potentialities of a position."

Third, composition, the highest form of development, calling for the utmost resourcefulness and a higher degree of knowledge of chess strategy, its poetry and its art. This art, the upper world of chess (as I may term it) into which we have developed, and the glories of the higher development cannot be conceived by you of the underworld."

That the immortal Shakespeare had attained the upper world is evidenced by the immortal lines dedicated to the shrine of Caissa: "Age cannot wither nor custom stale its infinite variety." Surely it must be admitted as beyond cavil that these classic lines are a tribute to the infinite variety of the end game and the problem, for all games begin nearly alike, there being little variations from pawn to king."

My dear sir, I know you are now convinced of the superiority of our cult to that of the 'underworld,' and that you will make every effort to speedily emerge from the present chrysalis state of your mind and join us, so that you may experience that true communion of soul with soul which we feel when we have before us an exquisite specimen of end game or problem. Imagine, if you can, the feelings of a true poet perusing for the first time the lines of some immortal bard. Imagine if you can the transports of feeling of an artist as he gazes upon the masterpiece of some old and revered master. Their feelings are ours, for as end games and problems are the poetry and art

of chess, so are we poets and artists and lovers of that poetry and art. Imagine the feelings of the true lover of nature, at the turning of a road coming suddenly upon a landscape of wondrous beauty, and as he stands transfixed, his soul surcharged with an ecstasy no pen or word can describe, but one thought can obtrude, and that is that his friends might be there to share his rapture."

It was with a feeling akin to this that I wended my way to the house of my friend, Billy McCracken, that night and laid before him that solution. As we arose and clasped hands across the chessboard, soul gazing into soul, the atmosphere seemed charged with some divine influence, and you who find your stimulus and your reward in being "elated" can feel nothing, understand nothing of that vast beyond, that super-exaltation that surges within us, which far transcends the highest pinnacle of the esthetic ever attained by other mortals and which almost overwhelmed us as we agreed that that position is a hell of a fine thing! I am yours for Caissa, W. A. STROHMER.

COMPOSITE GAME

Probably due to vacations, etc., correspondence in the composite game is a trifle scanty. The move chosen for white is 11, S-QS5, threatening to win another black pawn. We take the liberty of making black's move, for he hasn't much choice: 11½, P-QR3, which gives a chance of recovering pawn. Readers will vote on white's twelfth move.

Professor Ryder being on vacation there was no game played last week in the Gruer-Ryder match. Here is the eighth game of the match, with notes by Gruer:

GAME NO. 96

QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED

Gruer White	Ryder Black	Gruer White	Ryder Black
1—P-Q4	P-Q4	24—RxRch	BxR
2—P-QB4	P-K3	25—Q-Q3	Q-B2
3—S-QB3	S-KB3	26—S-R5	B-R
4—B-S5	B-K2	27—SxP(e)	B-S
5—P-K3	QS-Q2	28—BxB	P-QR3
6—S-KB3	Castles	29—Q-Q7	QxQ
7—R-B	P-QB3	30—BxQ	K-B(f)
8—Q-B2(a)	PxP	31—K-B	P-QR4
9—BxP	P-QB4(b)	32—P-QR3(g)	PxP
10—P-Q3	B-S2	33—PxP	B-B3
11—Castles	P-KR3(c)	34—BxP	K-K2(h)
12—BxS	BxB	35—B-R4(i)	B-B6
13—S-K4	B-K2	36—P-S5	B-S5
14—KR-Q	R-QB	37—P-B6	B-R4
15—S-B5(d)	SxS	38—K-K2	K-Q3
16—Pxs	Q-B2	39—K-Q3	K-B4
17—S-Q4	KR-Q	40—K-K4	K-S5
18—Q-K2	R-Q4	41—P-B7	BxP
19—P-QS4	B-B3	42—P-S6	RxSP
20—B-K4	R-Q2	43—B-K8	K-R4
21—S-R3	RxRch	44—BxB	K-Q3(j)
22—RxR	Q-K4	45—Drawn	
23—Q-B2	R-Q		

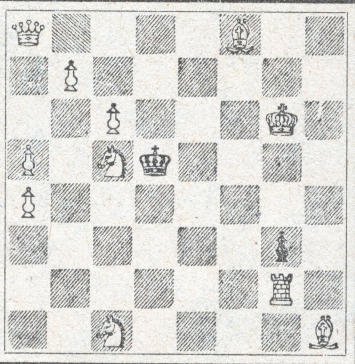
NOTES

- Formerly B-Q3 was played in the position. The text is much better.
- I believe this line of play to be bad for Black.
- Loses valuable time, as white would have anyhow exchanged. Black should play P-QR3 in order to play P-QB4 as soon as possible.
- S-K5 came in for consideration.
- White has obtained his object, but here relaxes and misses the winning continuation. He did not give sufficient consideration to the drawing possibilities with bishops of opposite colors: 27, RxP, BxB; 28, SxS, B-B3; 29, QxP, K-R2; 30, Q-Q3, ch, P-S3; 31, Q-Q6 would have won.
- Black's king is more favorably placed than White's. Black plays the ending very well.
- PxP was better, but ending probably a draw.
- Very necessary.
- B-R6, with better chances.
- To be two pawns ahead and only draw is very disgusting. To be two pawns behind and draw is very pleasing. It is all in the point of view.

Problems

A. J. F.

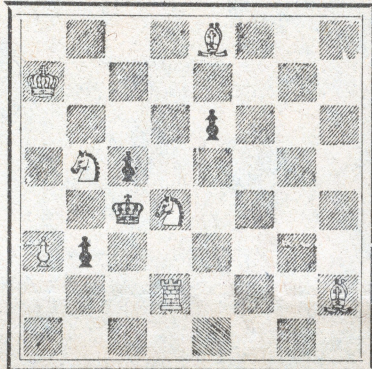
PROBLEM NO. 105
By Frank Maus



Mate in two.

PROBLEM NO. 106

By G. B. ROBERTS, Omaha, Neb.
(After E. L. Church, Ahwahnee, Cal.)



Mate in three.

Solution to No. 106, S-S7, the changed mate being Q-B8 mate, instead of S-K4 after black plays P-B5.

Solution to No. 107, 1PxP, P-S4; 2K-B6, P-S5; 3K-Q5, P-S6; 4K-K4 KxP (if P-S7 white wins), 5K-Q3 and draws.

Solvers' list held over: J. Ellis, Los Gatos and E. Van Camp, city. S-QB5, in No. 105, defeated by B-B2 or Q1.

R. Folger, South San Francisco, No. 107, printed correctly. Several others claimed a misprint.