

# Lecture Noesis

15.09.2023

## *Introduction*

Some time ago I was approached by Bas van Doren with the request to give a short lecture at a club night of **Noesis**, the first successful student chess club in the history of Eindhoven. In the distant past, the TU chess club, **Basileia**, hasx been part of the history of my current chessclub W.L.C (Woensel Lichttoeren combination), in the late 1960ties when I joined a chessclub for the first time.

But further investigation revealed that Basileia was a chess and draughts club for the staff, and not a student chess club. There have been attempts to do so, but they never lasted long, so **kudos to the founders and members of Noesis!**

I think that Bas has also fallen victim to the widespread misunderstanding that the stronger chess players also have more to say... Compare it with the opening of a chess tournament, and listen to the directors or dignitaries. Usually you don't hear much more than a nonsense about the relationship between chess and management, between chess and governance, or some other weird comparison. Anyway, it is not easy to give Bas a "no", and I also have sympathies for a student chess club, as in retrospect it does not seem such a long time ago that I was a student myself - not in Eindhoven but in Utrecht - which brings back good memories. :-) That time flies, becomes clear however when I look in the mirror !

What can you tell in a short timespan such as this, what should be the theme of such a talk? It is clear that chess players want to see positions – at least it applies to me and chessplayers that I know and have known - and Bas told me that something spectacular or unusual attracts more attention. He also suggested to talk about my own games , but that didn't really seem like a happy idea to me. The more I have analyzed my games in the past, the more dramatically the quality decreased. Moreover, when demonstrating games, you have to focus on a number of moments that are less interesting for a larger audience, such as the opening stage, boring manoeuvring etc. So that seemed more suitable for a training than a lecture. A training is supposed to be boring, isn't it ?

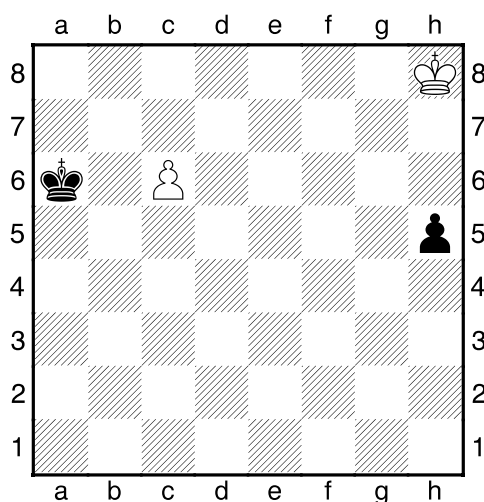
You can of course also wonder what kind of audience you will be dealing with at such a lecture. According to Bas, the current members of Noesis are very diverse, not only in terms of playing strength, but also of fanaticism. Chess is a hobby for some, and a calling for others.

If you want to define the game of chess, you can define the game of the club as battle. There are also chess players who promote their sport as "art". In my view, you should not be so much involved with the games. Parts can be very beautiful, but they contain errors and are therefore actually unfinished works of art... A sculpture without a head!

That is why I want to give some examples of chess as an art in my story, using a selection of endgame studies. **At first glance they are clear positions with little material on the board, but you will see surprising twists and turns that seem to materialize out of the blue.** Nowadays, modern chess trainers suggest that regular practice with endgame studies is a good way to develop your fantasy and width of vision. No more one dimensional thinking, miracles sometimes happen in chess and are waiting to be found.

## Reti,R. – White to play and draws

1921



The nice thing about a good endgame study is that it indicates that there are limits to our understanding of the logic of chess. Look at this statement, I believe that any player would resign without hesitation. The black pawn is out of reach of the white king, and the white pawn is harmless. Or not ?

**1. ♔g7 h4**

1... ♔b6 2. ♔f6 h4 3. ♔e5=

**2. ♔f6 ♔b6**

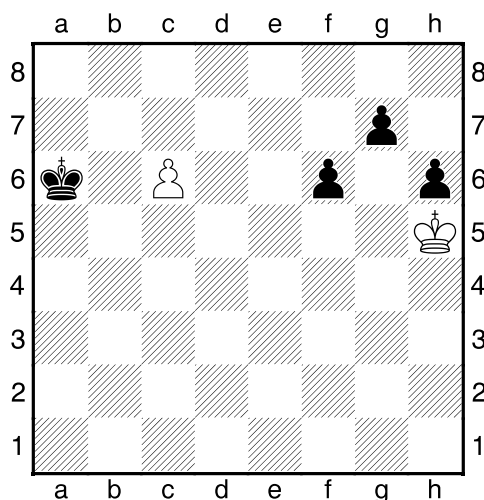
2... h3 3. ♔e6! h2 4. c7=

**3. ♔e5! h3 4. ♔d6 h2 5. c7=**

Since the publication of this study in 1921, this mechanism has been called the Réti maneuver. In chess, the Pythagorean theorem does not apply, the path from h8 to h2 is just as long via e5 as it is via the h-file...

## Reti,R – White to play and draws

1928



The second example is a variation on a theme that is now familiar to us. Once again white seems to be fighting for a lost cause. But see what happens:

**1. ♔g6 ♖b6**

1...h5 2. ♔xg7 h4 3. ♔xf6 ♖b6 4. ♔e5=; 1...f5 2. ♔xg7 f4 3. ♔f6 f3 (3... ♖b6 4. ♔e5=) 4. ♔e6= (4. ♔e7)

**2. ♔xg7 h5**

2...f5 3. ♔f6 f4 4. ♔e5 f3 5. ♔d6=

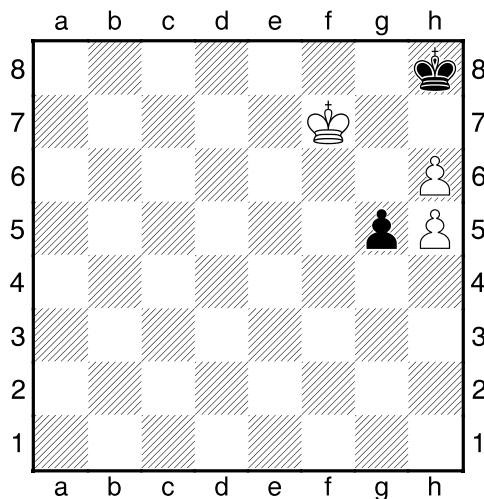
**3. ♔xf6 h4 4. ♔e5**

And everyone in the audience will have recognized the Reti maneuver by now. The white king moves back diagonally – for the king, strangely enough, no longer road than directly – and gains pace along the way by threatening to protect his passed pawn.

**4...h3 5. ♔d6**

## Kramer,A. – White to play and draws

1922



Once again a position that exceeds the logical understanding of the average club or tournament player. The g-pawn just seems to march towards promotion, and nothing or no one seems to be able to change that. Seems..., because there follows

**1.♔f6 g4 2.♔g6 ♔g8!**

2...g3 3.h7 g2 4.♔h6 leads to White's goal more quickly, but White still has to be precise with his tempo.

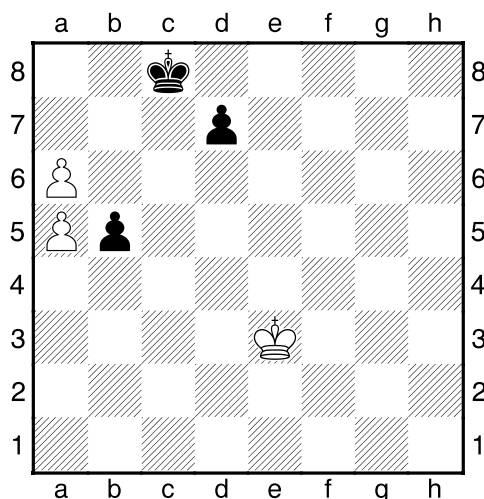
**3.h7+ ♔h8 4.♔g5 g3 5.♔g6!**

Everything becomes clear, White achieves an extremely creative draw by creating a stalemate corner for his king. Not something you immediately think about in the practical game. However, it seems that this study is directly based on ... a practical game !

**5...g2 6.♔h6=**

### Kubbel,K. – White to play and draws

1922



Black's pawns can be protected in this position by placing them horizontally next to each other. At first glance, the white a-pawns are absolutely no counterbalance, and it seems only a matter of time before the black king intervenes. But with the idea from the previous example in mind, the white player can also achieve a draw in this case.

**1.♔d4 d6**

♔c5.. was threatened which eliminates the pawn

**2.♔c3!**

And now White intends ♔b4..

**2...d5 3.♔d4! b4**

This was mentioned to in the introduction to this endgame study. The pawns protect each other, and the capture of one puts White's king out of reach of the other. But there is a resource available...

**4.♔xd5! b3 5.♔c6 ♔b8**

5...b2 6.a7

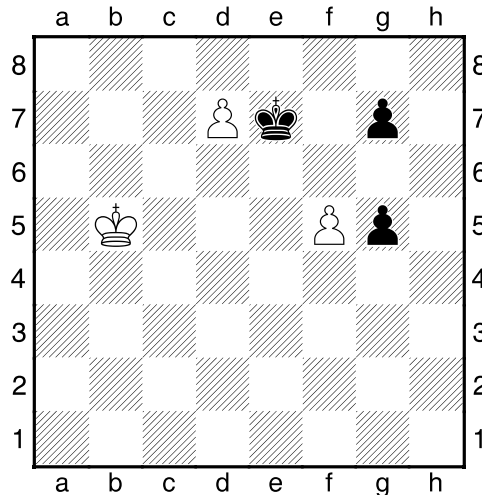
6.♔b6

The so called stalemate–corner from Kramer's study materializes!

6...b2 7.a7+ ♕a8 8.♔a6=

## Selesniev,A. – White to play and draws

1918



Selesniev was a well-known Russian player who was present in the 1914 tournament in Mannheim when the First World War broke out. He was interned together with his better-known colleagues Alekhine and Bogoljubov. Alekhine soon returned, Bogoljubov eventually settled in Germany, and Selesniev later ended up in France where he lived until his old age. He completed this study during his forced stay in Germany. It doesn't look nice for White. He must stay near the black g-pawn, he will lose d7 and also f5 due to tempo play. One cannot possibly imagine here that one can let the black g-pawn run... But there is another escape:

1.♔c6 ♕d8 2.♔d5 ♕xd7 3.♔e4!

After the logical 3.♔e5? ♕e7 4.♔d4 ♕f6 5.♔e4 g4 6.♔f4 g3 7.♔xg3 ♕xf5-+ White loses as described in the introduction. But what is the difference anyway one may ask ?

3...♕d6

3...♔e7 4.♔f3 ♕f6 5.♔g4=

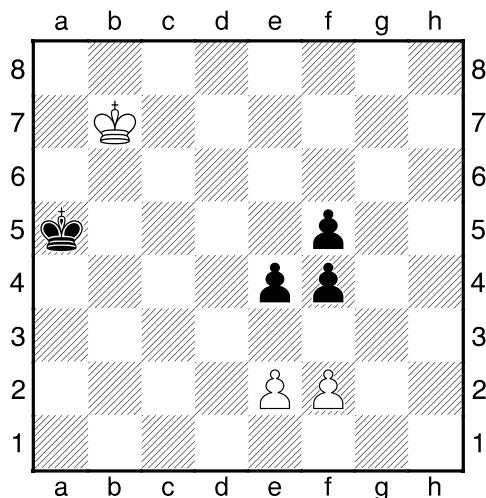
4.♔f3 ♕e5 5.♔g4 ♕f6

The key position, now it will be clear that there is an escape from the tempo-pressure situation, which allows White to force a draw.

6.♔h5!

## Kovalenko,A. – White to play and draws

1927



This is one of my favorite studies. With very limited material, the composer has managed to create a nice arrangement. Over the years I have shown this position to many players, and no one finds the surprising draw without a hint !

**1.♔c6 ♖b4 2.♔d5 ♔c3 3.♔e5 e3!**

Because 3...♔d2 4.♔xf4 ♔xe2 5.♔xf5 leads directly to a draw. Here the player usually stops his analysis because the logic of the game player is unable to grasp the decisive turn....

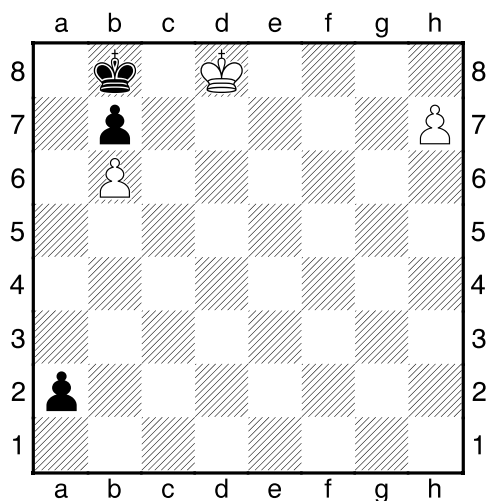
**4.♔xf4!**

When you see the move it is no longer difficult, but it is nevertheless elegant how the white player lets go of the pawn to construct a stalemate in the middle of the board.

**4...exf2 5.♔e3! =**

## Joseph,D. – White to play and wins

1922



A world-famous study, which is said to have originated during a train journey by Mr. Joseph. If both pawns are promoted, White's ambitions are hampered by an annoying stalemate twist: he has to leave the enemy queen standing. Still, White can achieve victory.

**1.h8♚ a1♚ 2.♚g8!**

2.♚e8 ♚g7! clamps off the white pieces and leads to nothing; 2.♚f8 ♚a3

3.♚g8 ♚d6+ doesn't end well either.

**2...♚a2!**

Black must continue his stalemate idea with a simultaneous attack on the white queen, because the white king threatened to leave the back rank with checkmate.

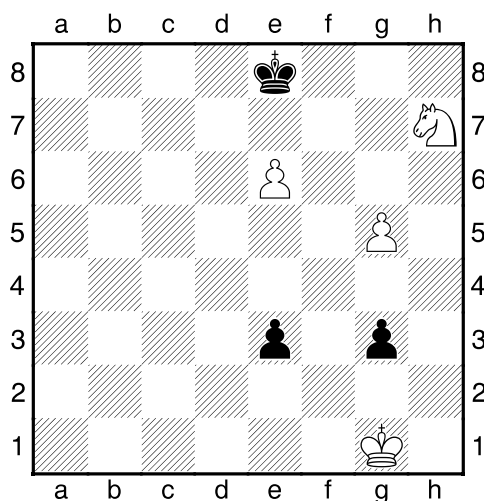
**3.♚e8 ♚a4!** And here the same comment applies as with the previous move.

**4.♚e5+ ♚a8 5.♚h8!**

This completes a "queen triangle" and puts the black king on a8. As a result, the stalemate escape no longer works!

## Svoboda,R. – White to play and wins

1928



In this Czech study, White is a knight up, but the winning position still seems to be in danger, because the e-pawn threatens to move on, and Black also wants to eliminate the e-pawn with ..♚e7. Because we have already seen that two pawns with a line between them cannot be tackled by the king, this would mean a draw.

**1.♚f1 ♚e7**

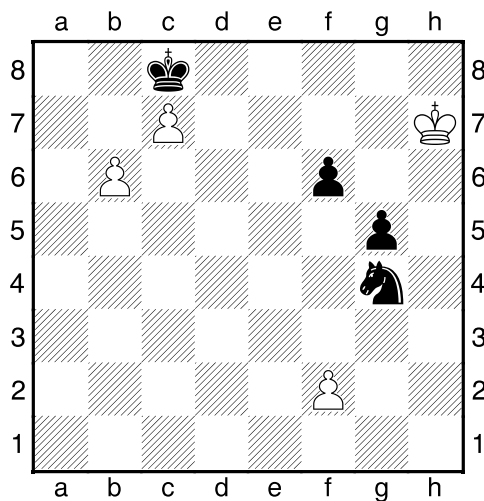
White now appears to have an extremely surprising winning opportunity and I have the impression that the theme is important for the practical game.

**2.♜f8! ♚xf8 3.g6+-**

And because he is forced to move (Zugzwang), Black has to let go of one of the pawns. Note that if it White's move he would lose the game!

## Troitski,A. – White to play and draws

1896



The Russian Troitsky is one of the greats in the history of endgame composition. He was an assistant ranger in the vast Russian forests for a long time, and evil tongues claim that he tried to chase away boredom by dealing with the secrets of endgame study. Black is a piece up, and if the f-pawn falls it is over.

**1.f3 ♖e5 2.♔g7 ♜xf3 3.♔xf6 g4**

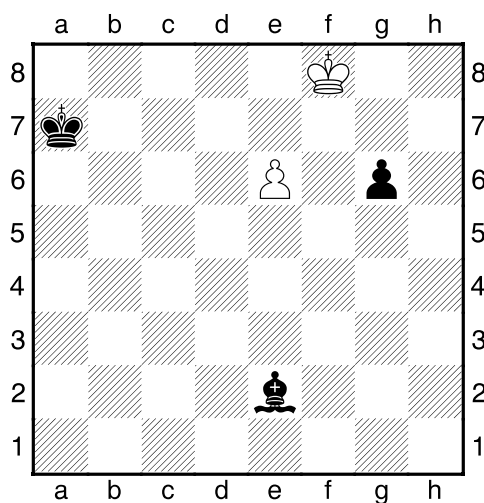
So far forced and apparently completely lost for White, but he now plays the last trump.

**4.♔f5! g3 5.♔g4 g2 6.♔h3=**

These endgame studies give you the impression that there is always a stalemate corner to be created. Unfortunately, everything has to be in the right place and in practice this is rarely the case.

## Reti,R. – White to play and draws

1928





A number of creative endgame studies are known from Richard Reti, as a practical player one of the originators of hypermodern chess, together with Aaron Nimzowitsch, among others. I can already reveal that he sometimes elaborated on his own themes...How does White stop the g-pawn, one should get an idea from previous examples of Reti from this lecture!

**1.♔e7!**

Paradoxical to step in front of the pawn, but the Reti maneuver brings the king in the wake of the g-pawn just in time.

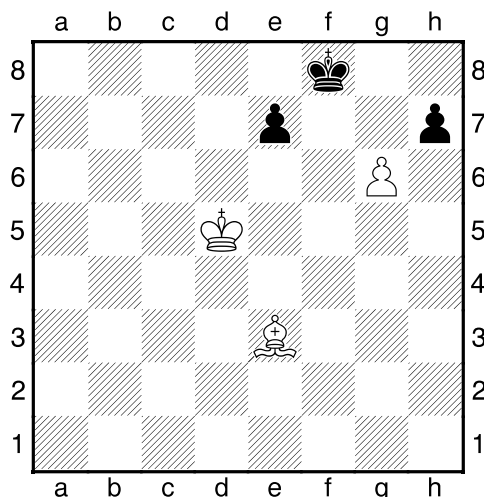
**1...g5 2.♔d6 g4 3.e7 ♕b5 4.♔c5**

And voila, you save time by attacking the bishop, and ... the diagonal path is just as long as the straight path.

**4...♕e8 5.♔d4=**

### Troitski,A. – White to play and wins

1895



A very well-known endgame study by our assistant forester. White's hopes of winning are hampered by the fact that the last pawn is in danger of being exchanged. He must therefore trap the black player in a corner where there is a risk of stalemate. Winning is not difficult once you have seen it, but requires overcoming a brain blockage that the game player has...

**1.♕h6+ ♔g8 2.g7 ♔f7**

Or 2...e6+ 3.♔d6! (3.♔e5? ♔f7 4.♔d6 e5=) 3...♔f7 4.♔e5 ♔g8 5.♔f6+-

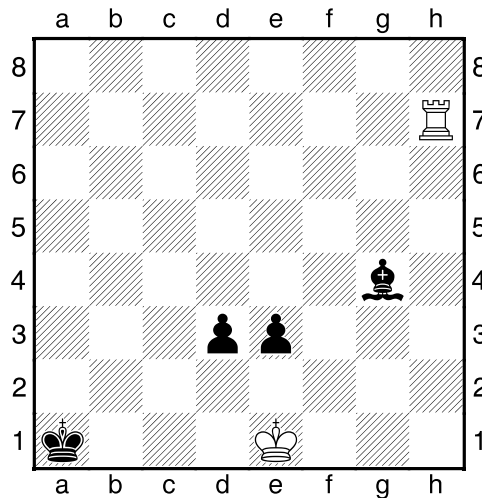
Who on earth would think of giving it up when you still have one pawn? It turns out that, despite the theoretical lack of mate potential, White wins because the remaining black pawns hinder the king. Endgame studies are a good illustration of "exceptions to the rule."

**3.g8♖+ ♔xg8 4.♔e6 ♔h8 5.♔f7+-**

and ♕g7 checkmate next.

## Welling,G. – White to play and draws

1978



I can't resist putting a small production of my own on the demonstration board. The position is based on a twist that I got on the board in a game I played against Herman Grooten at the time. I made this miniature study when I was a member of the WLC chess club in 1978, and I believe it was the chairman Aad Broekhoven who pointed out to me that it was printed in "Schakend Nederland", something I had overlooked. Now the position, how does White stop the black d-pawn?

**1. ♖h2**

After 1. ♖a7+ ♔b2 2. ♖b7+ ♔c3 3. ♖c7+ ♔d4-+ White runs out of checks

**1... ♕b1**

All pieces participate, Black threatens .. ♔c1 and ..d2+ so White has to act fast.

**2. ♖e2!**

That was essentially the little joke with which I surprised Herman with in a slightly different setting. However, in the study it still has a tail.

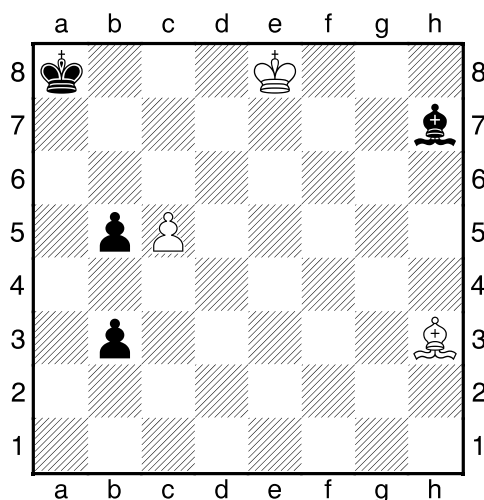
**2... ♕c1! 3. ♖xe3 d2+ 4. ♕f1!**

A final temptation, which every solver has fallen for 4. ♔f2 d1 ♘+!-+

**4... d1 ♙+ 5. ♖e1=**

## Troitski,A. – White to play and wins

1927



In this example we encounter a theme that is rarely seen in games. For the endgame study composer, however, such constructions are commonplace.]

**1.c6 b2!**

1...♙e4 2.c7 ♖b7 3.♙g2!; 1...♙g6+? 2.♔d8

**2.c7 b1♙**

2...♙g6+ 3.♔d8 ♖b1♙ 4.c8♙+ ♔a7 5.♙c7+ ♔a8 6.♙g2+ (6.♔c8? ♙f5+)

6...♙e4 7.♔c8+-

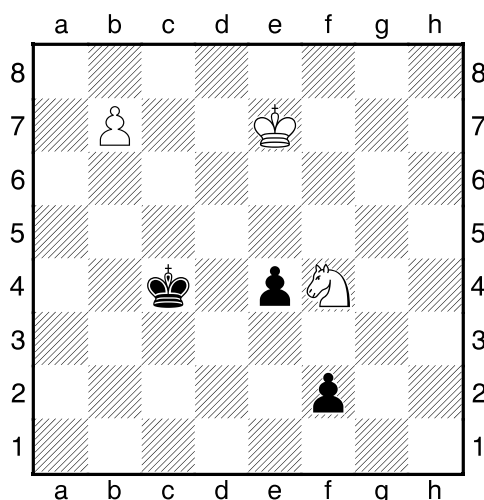
**3.c8♙+ ♔a7 4.♙c7+ ♔a8 5.♙g2+ ♙e4**

And now the theme emerges: the cross pin !

**6.♙h7! ♔b8 7.♙xe4+-**

## Troitski,A. – White to play and wins

1934



The following example illustrates the power of an optimal piece placement. In addition to sharpening the imagination, the endgame study can increase the sense of harmonic interplay of the pieces. That is why I can recommend it to every club player to look at a few studies from time to time.

### 1. ♖d5!

1. ♖g2 provides the king with an additional escape square after 1... ♔d4

2. ♖8 ♖ f1 ♖ 3. ♖b6+ ♔c3

### 1... ♔d4!

1... ♔xd5 2. ♖8 ♖ f1 ♖ 3. ♖d6+ ♔c4 4. ♖a6+ and the queen gets lost.

### 2. ♖8 ♖ f1 ♖ 3. ♖b6+ ♔e5

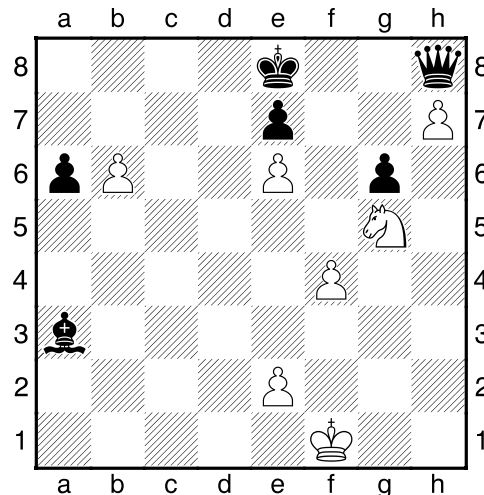
3... ♔xd5 4. ♖d6+ ♔c4 5. ♖a6+

### 4. ♖e3!+-

and the white pieces work together optimally, resulting in mate or loss of the queen.

## Troitski, A. – White to play and wins

1935



After the previous examples, with a small number of pieces, I would like to conclude with two more complicated examples. Of course, a lot has been done with miniature studies in recent centuries and it is not easy to come up with something new. But with a few more pieces on the board, the chance of originality increases disproportionately. The following endgame study by Troitski illustrates a typical study theme.

### 1. ♖b7 ♖d6

1... ♔f8 2. ♖8 ♖+ ♔g7 3. ♖e5++-

### 2. ♖f7 ♖a1+

After 2... ♖xh7 3. ♖xd6+ exd6 4. ♖8 ♖++- the queen gets lost

### 3. ♖g2 ♖xf4

3... ♖c7 4. ♖e5+-; 3... ♖b8 4. ♖e5 ♔d8 5. ♖8 ♖+ ♔c7 6. ♖c8++-

It's so simple if you know it, and so intensely difficult if you – as a game player – have never seen it before. If the defender has to defend against two threats on two diagonals (or on two lines), the attacker must perform an interference at the intersection of the diagonals (respectively lines). One sees...

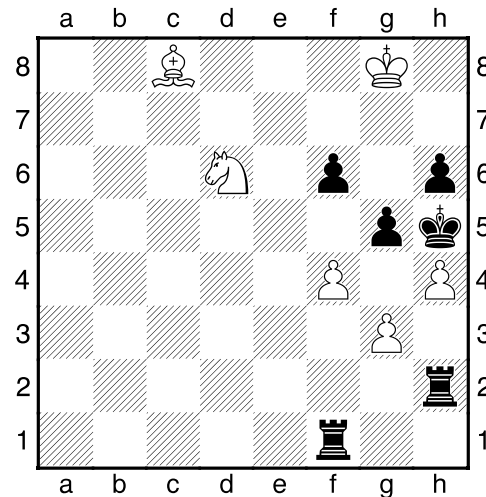
4. ♖e5! ♗xe5

4... ♕xe5 5. b8♖+ ♕xb8 6. h8♗#

5. h8♖+ ♗xh8 6. b8♖#

## Kasparyan, G. – White to play and win

1935



Another legend in the field of endgame studies is the Armenian Kasparyan. He died nearly 30 years ago, and a retrospective of his collected studies has been published a couple of years later. A very expensive pale blue cardboard book, but with intriguing content. I derive the following example from this. Not his best study, but one of the most famous and a nice finishing touch to this short lecture due to the spectacular final point.

1. ♖e8

1. ♖f5? ♔g4! 2. ♖e3+ ♔f3 3. ♖xf1 ♖f2= does not do the job for White

1... ♗g6 2. h5+!

2. f5+? ♖xf5 3. h5+ ♔xh5=

2... ♖xh5 3. f5+ ♖xf5 4. g4 ♖e5 5. ♗f5+!

5. ♖g7? f5

5... ♖xf5 6. ♖g7

A sensational final position. Everyone would like to win a game is this way.