British Endgame Study News

## Some studies by

Johann and Carl Behting
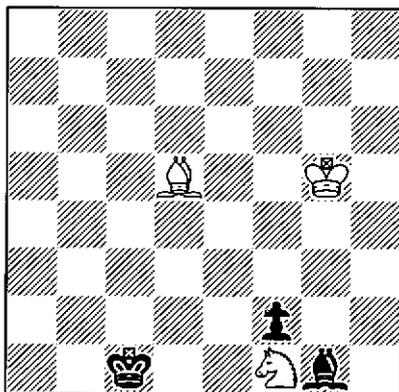
How can White win from here
(and the same with bRh1 and bPh2 as well)?

Some studies by Johann and Carl Behting

BESN has already devoted special numbers to the studies of Amelung and Sehwers, and Timothy Whitworth has dealt handsomely with those of Mattison. The present number completes our look at what I used to think of as the "Baltic German" study composers. However, in truth this description appears merely to refer to region and language of publication, and no inferences can be drawn about ethnic origin or nationality. German being then the region's common language of intellectual commerce, the region's chess players naturally employed it, just as modern scientists write for publication in English and as Newton and his contemporaries wrote in Latin.

Of these composers, the brothers Johann and Carl Behting were the least prolific. Harold van der Heijden's "Endgame study database III" contains a mere 56 studies by them, and several are versions one of another. However, the best were of the highest class. I am sometimes asked by would-be composers how many studies they need to produce before the exercise becomes worth while, and my answer is very simple: one good one. The productivity of the Behting brothers was not quite as low as this, but quality definitely outweighed quantity. Their studies are in many anthologies, and three were quoted in our "Tattersall" special numbers 42 and 43; here are some more.
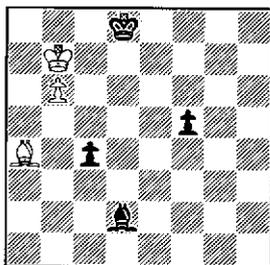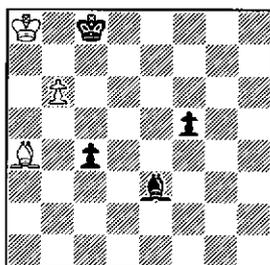

1 - draw   **1a - after 3 Ka8**

Johann's **1** appeared in *Rigaer Tageblatt* in 1893. Try 1 Ka8: no, 1...Ba5 (simplest) 2 b7 Bc7, after which Black's bishop stops White's pawn while his own two pawns will soon overwhelm White's bishop. And surely 1 Ka7 is met by 1...Be3? Indeed it is, with a simple win after 2 Ka6 f4 and a routine if lengthy win even after 2...Bxb6 3 Kb5. 1 Kc6, perhaps, intending to meet 1...Kc8 by 2 Kd5 bringing the king down to help the bishop? No, because after 2...c3 and 3...f4 the White king will have to come down to the fourth rank, and Black will remove the helpless b-pawn with another routine win.
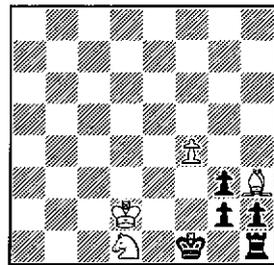
The drawing move is **1 Ka6**. The threat is 2 b7, meeting 2...Bf4 by 3 Bc2 winning the f-pawn and 2...Kc7 by 3 Ka7 winning the game, and if 1...Be3, so that 2 b7 Kc7 can no longer be met by 3 Ka7, White still has 3 Kb5 drawing (3...c3 4 Kc4 Bd2 5 Bc2 f4 6 Bc4 and the b-pawn is defended). But of course the natural move is **1...Kc8**, and after **2 Ka7** why not again **2...Be3**? Because White now has **3 Ka8!** (see **1a**), and after **3...Bxb6** he can play **4 Bb3!** with stalemate or win of a pawn.
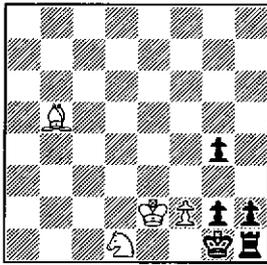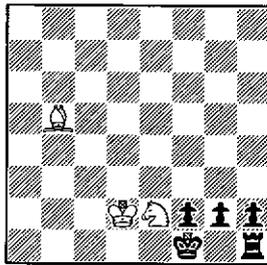
2 - win **2a - 1 Ke3, after 4 Kd2** **2b - 1 Kd3 g3, after 5 Bh3**

2 (*Rigasche Rundschau* 1901) turns out to be unexpectedly complicated. It is natural to keep Black under tight control, leading to lines like 1 Ke3 g3 2 Nc3 gxf2 3 Ne2+ Kf1 4 Kd2 (see **2a**) with Nf4+ to follow, but Black can play 4...g1N and hold the draw. How can we do better?
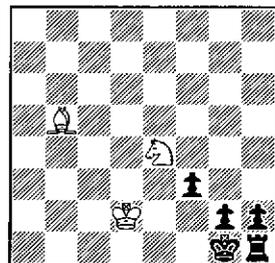
The unlikely answer is **1 Kd3!** giving Black a second move. Suppose first that he plays **1...g3** as before. White now plays **2 f4!** (we shall see the objection to 2 f3 in a moment), and after **2...Kf1** he continues with **3 Kd2+ Kg1 4 Bd7 Kf1 5 Bh3** giving **2b**. Again Black has a choice of move, but it turns out to make no difference: **5...Kg1/Rg1 6 Bg4 Kf1/Rh1 7 Be2+ Kg1 8 Nc3** (quickest) **Kf2 9 Ne4+ Kg1 10 Ng5 Kf2 11 Nh3 mate**. The objection to 2 f3 now appears obvious, but in fact the point is crucial only if Black plays 5...Rg1. If he plays 5...Kg1, White has time for 6 f4, and after 6...Kf1 7 f5 the pawn is out of the way and he wins as before. But if Black plays 5...Rg1, White *doesn't* have time for 6 f4 because 6...h1B! sets up a stalemate (see **2c**).
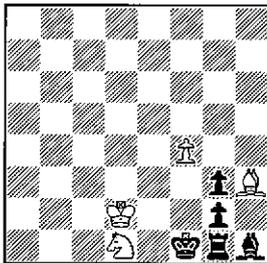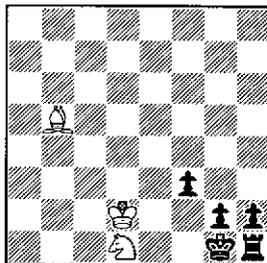

**2c - 2 f3, 5...Rg1 6 f4 h1B** **2d - 1...Kf1, after 3...gxf3** **2e - 4...Kf2, after 5...Kg1**

And there is more. Instead of 1...g3, Black can play **1...Kf1**. White continues **2 Kd2+ Kg1 3 f4**, after which 3...g3 transposes into the previous line but **3...gxf3** makes him find something new (see **2d**). Yet again, the answer is to give Black a second move: **4 Nc3!** Now 4...f2 allows a simple mate in three, but **4...Kf2** is more interesting: **5 Ne4+** (exploiting the blocker which Black himself put on f3) **Kg1** (see **2e**) **6 Kc2/Kc3!** (getting out of range of f1) **f2 7 Ng5 f1~ 8 Nh3 mate**.
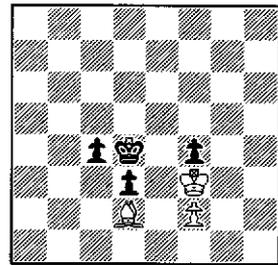
I haven't seen the original source, but the transcription in Harold van der Heijden's "Endgame study database III" gives 1...g3 as the main line. I must confess I don't see why, because 1...Kf1 seems to give all the play after 1...g3 and some more besides.
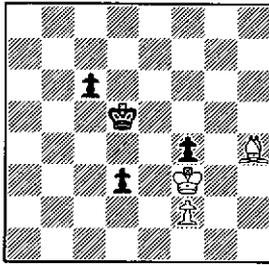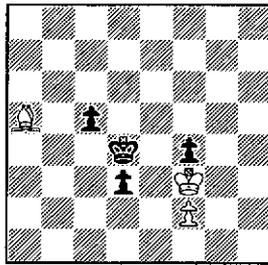
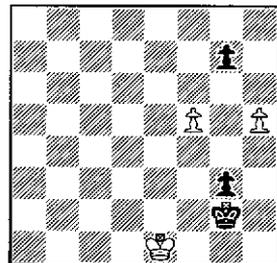3 - win   3a - after ...c5 and ...Kd4   3b - see text

Johann's **3** appeared in *Düna Zeitung* in 1902. 1 Bg5 Kd4 2 Bxf4 is only drawn, a typical line being 2...c5 3 Bd2 (to stop 3...Kc3) c4 (this is **3b** without bPf4, and both sides must tread carefully) 4 Bb4 (only move to draw) c3 (only) 5 Ba5 (only) Kc4 (5...d2 also draws, but this is simpler) 6 Ke3 (only) d2 (only) 7 Ke2 (only) Kb3 (only) and White must concede the draw by 8 Bxc3. To improve on this, White must bring his bishop to bear immediately on the diagonal a5-e1: **1 Bd8!** Black's natural moves are ...c5 and ...Kd4 and it doesn't matter which way round he plays them, hence **1...c5/Kd4 2 Ba5 Kd4/c5** and we have **3a**. If now 3 Bd2 then 3...c4 (see **3b**) and Black even wins; he plays as before, and White's drawing move 6 Ke3 is no longer available. However, White can temporize by **3 Be1**. Black still has nothing better than **3...c4**, and after **4 Bd2** we have **3b** but with Black to move. King moves are hopeless, hence **4...c3**, but now White does take the f-pawn and the rest is routine (given is **5 Bxf4 Kc4 6 Ke3 d2 7 Ke2 Kb3 8 Bxd2** etc).
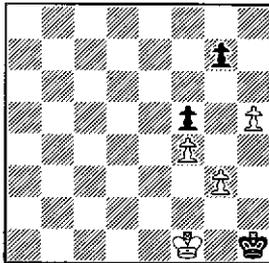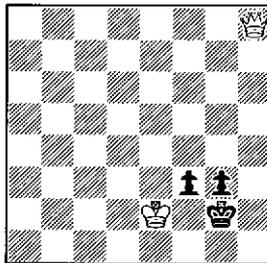

4 - win   4a - 1 Ke2, after 7...f3+   4b - main line, after 3...g3

In **4** (*Rigasche Rundschau* 1905), White can perhaps hope to break through by playing g4 followed by f5, but if he does it at once (1 g4 fxg4 2 f5) Black's free g-pawn will give him an easy win. Nor does prefacing the pawn advance by 1 Kf2 Kh2 help, nor even the further preface 2 Kf3 Kh3. Try 1 Ke2, hoping for 1...Kh2 2 Kf2? Yes, this wins easily enough (2...Kh3 3 Kf3 Kh2 4 g4 etc), but why should Black play 1...Kh2 when he has 1...Kg2 available? True, this will block the g-pawn, but if we play it through we find 2 g4 fxg4 3 f5 g3 4 f6 (4 h6 is no better, 4...gxh6 5 f6 Kh2 and both sides will promote) gxf6 5-6 h7 f4 7 h8Q f3+ (see **4a**) and Black will draw in comfort.

This seems to leave only **1 Ke1**: surely not? But yes. Black can still play **1...Kg2**, but now the continuation **2 g4 fxg4 3 f5 g3** (see **4b**) **4 f6** (again 4 h6 leads to 4...gxh6 5 f6 Kh2 and both sides will promote) **gxf6 5 h6 f5** (but now a king move to the h-file fails because White's promotion will give check) **6 h7 f4 7 h8Q** is more dangerous because 7...f3 gives **4a** with the White king on e1 instead of e2. Not being in check, White has time to bring his queen into play, and he has various ways to win. Quickest, counting moves to mate, is 8 Qa8; simplest is probably 8 Qf6 commanding the f-file, and this works even if Black tries 1...Kg1 instead of 1...Kg2.
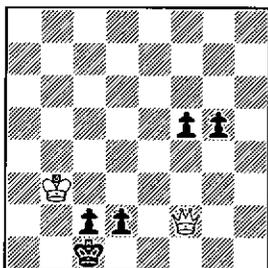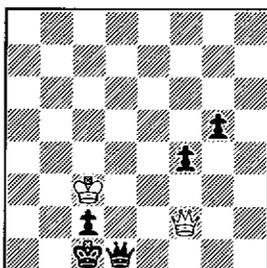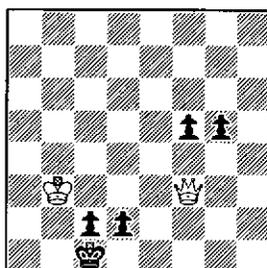
5 - win   5a - after 3 Kc3   5b - see text

One of the most famous of Johann Behting's studies is that which was reproduced as **10** in special number 42, featuring a mating finish against a newly promoted queen. Johann's **5**, which appeared in *Rigasche Rundschau* in 1907, is another on the same theme. In itself, it is neat but not particularly difficult: **1 Qe3** (threat 2 Kc3 etc) **f4** (1...Kd1 2 Qg1+ Ke2 3 Kxc2 etc) **2 Qf2 d1Q** (2...f3 3 Qe3 etc) **3 Kc3** (see **5a**) and Black must move to his detriment, the mating finish being spiced by the addition of the pawns on f4 and g5. However, two points occurred to me while I was preparing this text. Firstly, **5a** is reciprocal zugzwang, and indeed it's a full-point reciprocal zugzwang since White to play would quickly lose; secondly, if it is Black to move in the initial position, he can take advantage of this by playing 1...d1Q 2 Kc3 f4. Can we therefore exploit this recirpocal zugzwang by starting with the White queen somewhere else, with the idea that an immediate 1 Qf2 loses and 1 Qe3 f4 2 Qf2 wins?

It is soon seen that there are only two squares which do not allow White a simple alternative win: f3, shown in **5b**, and b6, shown alongside in **5c**. Even so, there is a hurdle to be overcome, because in each case White can play 1 Kc3, after which a queen promotion by Black loses quickly and a knight promotion is forced. The resulting complications are not easily resolved, at least not by me, but these are "only" 7-man positions, and in due course the computer will give us the definitive answer. If either should prove sound, we shall have yet another case where the power of the computer has enabled a worthwhile development of an existing composition.
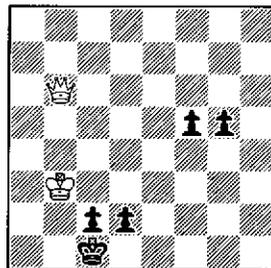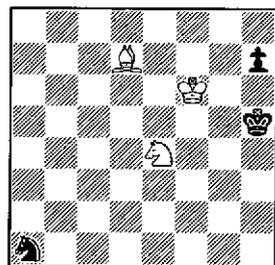

5c - see text
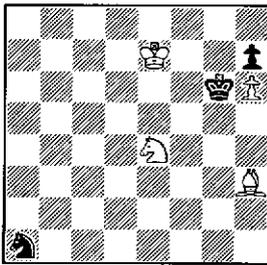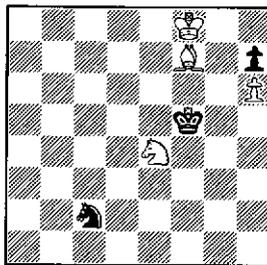
**6 - win** **6a** - 1...Nc2, after 3 Kf8 **6b** - main line, after 3 Bd7

Now to Carl Behting. As transcribed by Harold van der Heijden, the solution to **6** (*Düna Zeitung* 1903) is confined to a bare main line, which will have been a bit rough on the newspaper's readers. We can do a little better. White's first task is to try to prevent the knight's escape, so **1 Be6**, cutting off 1...Nb3, is almost automatic. The alternative escape move 1...Nc2 is still available, but the computer gives 2 Bf7+ Kf5 (if 2...Kxh6 then 3 Kf6 Nb4/Ne3 4 Nf2 and Black must sacrifice to avoid mate) 3 Kf8 (see **6a**) Ne3 (3...Kxe4 4 Bg6+) 4 Ng3+ (4 Nd6+ also works) Kf4 5 Kg7 and if 5...Kxg3 then 6 Be6 with Kxh7 to follow.
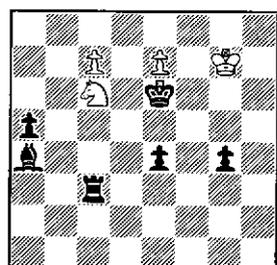
But the main line move is **1...Kxh6**, and now we are down to six men and can appeal to Eiko Bleicher's web site for a definitive analysis. This tells us that the composer's move **2 Kf6** is indeed the quickest (and probably much the simplest), although 2 Bf7 also leads to a win. If now 2...Nc2 then 3 Bf7 transposes into a line we have already seen, so the composer gives **2...Kh5**, after which comes **3 Bd7** aiming for a4 (see **6b**). Can the knight run while it has the chance? No, because it will put itself within range of a discovered check or worse: 3...Nb3/Nc2 4 Ng3+ Kh4 5 Nf5+ Kg4/Kh3 (5...Kh5 6 Ba4 and any move which saves the knight allows a quick mate) 6 Nd4+. So Black must allow White to play Ba4, and the rest is routine; the line actually given is **3...Kh4 4 Ba4 Kg4 5 Ke5 Kf3 6 Kd4 h5 7 Nf6** (there are several alternatives from here onwards) **h4 8 Kc3** (changing of the guard) **h3 9 Bc6+ Kf2 10 Ne4+ Kg1 11 Ng5+ h2 12 Nh3+**.
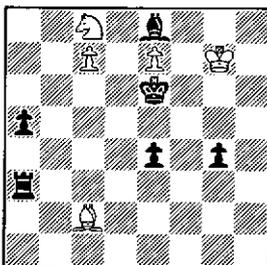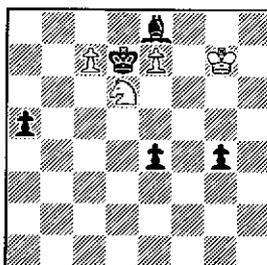

**7 - win** **7a** - 1...Rxa4, after 4 Nd6 **7b** - main line, after 3 Nc6

In general, the studies of Carl Behting tended to be more artificial than those of his brother, and several of them showed complicated themes involving more than one

piece. **7** (*Düna Zeitung* 1908) offers the lightest setting I know of a theme which is too often presented in a static and clumsy manner. 1 N~ Rc3 is hopeless (if anyone now wins, it will be Black), but perhaps this causes us to look at the preliminary move **1 Ba4**; if 1...Rxa4 then 2 Nb6, and after 2...Rc4 (what else?) then 3 Nxc4 Kd7 4 Nd6 and White will mop up (see **7a**). Hence **1...Bxa4**, but now the knight takes its other option, **2 Na7**, and after **2...Rc3** it can play **3 Nc6** cutting off both defenders (see **7b**). White will now promote with check, and will soon win further material.

This "sacrifice on the crossing square" theme is more usually seen in problems, but it requires at least four moves if the solution is not to be rather obvious (two to bring the Black men into position, one to play to the intersection square, and at least one to take advantage of the resulting chaos) and only a minority of problemists in pre-computer days ventured beyond two moves or three. Study composers find no difficulty encompassing the necessary length, but the presence of a rook and bishop on the side which is going to lose automatically pushes the material requirements towards the heavier end of the spectrum.
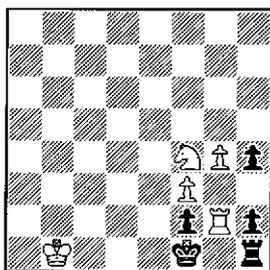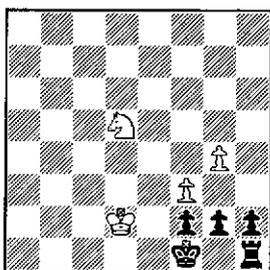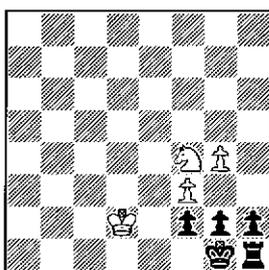

8 - draw   **8a** - after 3 Nd5   **8b** - after 4 Nf4

Play in Carl's **8** (*Rigaer Tageblatt* 1898) starts **1 Kc2**, and the refutation of 1...Ke1 is not without tactical points: 2 Kc3 (preparing for 5 Rc2) h3 (if 2...f1Q then 3 Nd3+ Qxd3+ 4 Kxd3 and any advantage lies with White) 3 Nd3+ Ke2 4 Rxf2+ Ke3 5 Rc2 (to stop 5...Rc1+ and 6...h1Q) Kxf3 6 g5 Kg3 7 g6 and if Black brings his rook round to stop the g-pawn White will play Nf2 and knock out the h-pawn. However, this is no more than analysis to mop up a secondary move, and the thematic play follows **1...h3**.

White cannot usefully withdraw his rook (2 Rg3 Rg1 3 Rxh3 h1Q 4 Rxh1 Rxh1 is an easy win for Black), and the move to draw is **2 Kd2**. Black captures and threatens to promote, **2...hxg2**, but **3 Nd5** stops him in his tracks (see **8a**); any promotion will be met with mate, as will 3...Rg1. Black therefore plays **3...Kg1**, but **4 Nf4** gives us the same again (see **8b**); a promotion to queen will allow immediate mate, and even a promotion to knight will only delay it for one move. There remains only **4...Kf1**, and **5 Nd5** brings us back to **8a**. This isn't perpetual check, it isn't even perpetual attack or perpetual mate threat (take away the White pawns in **8a** and **8b**, and White to play would lose); it can only be described as "perpetual provision for promotion".
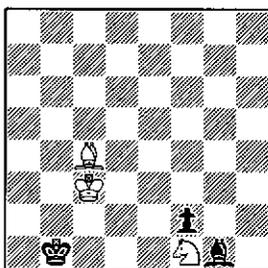
And an analytical note: the alternative move 1 Kc1 works after 1...h3, but not after 1...Ke1; White has only 2 Kc2, and the crucial move 5 Rc2 will not be available.
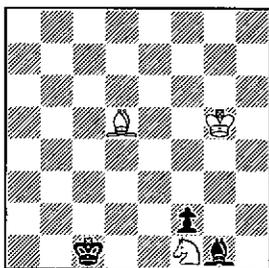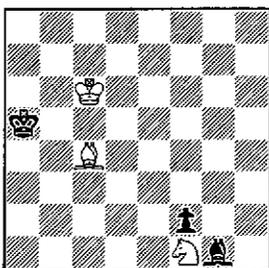
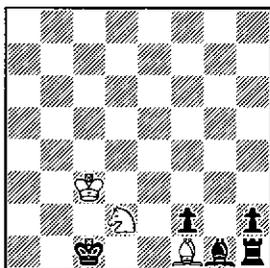**9** - win   **9a** - after 6 Bc4   **9b** - after 23 Bc4

We finish with a striking pair of studies published in *Rigaer Tageblatt* in 1905. Surely White cannot force mate in Johann's **9**, with his knight tied to f1? Indeed he cannot do so directly, but he *can* play to force stalemate, and this will make the bishop give itself away. The first requirement is to keep Black in the bottom left corner, and play starts **1 Kf6** ("1 Kf5? Kc2 2 Ke5 Kc3 3 Kd6 Kd4") **Kc2 2 Ke7 Kd3 3 Ke6 Kc3 4 Kd7 Kb4 5 Kc6 Ka5 6 Bc4**. So far, Eiko Bleicher's web site has said "only" to each of White's moves, but now Black has been corralled (see **9a**) and any reasonably systematic advance will lead to a win. The line actually given is **6...Kb4 7 Be2 Kd5 Ka5 8 Bb5 Kb4 9 Kb6 Kc3 10 Kc5 Kb3 11 Bc6 Kc3 12 Bd5 Kd3 13 Bf3 Kc3 14 Be2 Kb3 15 Bb5 Kc3 16 Bc4 Kb2 17 Kb4 Kc2 18 Bb5 Kb2 19 Ba4 Ka2 20 Bd1 Kb2 21 Bb3 Ka1 22 Kc3 Kb1 23 Bc4** (see **9b**) **Kc1** (if instead 23...Ka1 then 24 Kc2) **24 Bd3 Kd1 25 Kb2 Ke1 26 Kc2**, and the desired stalemate has been achieved.
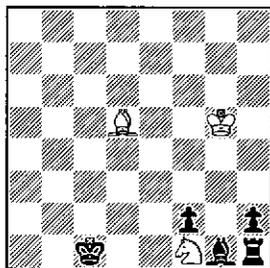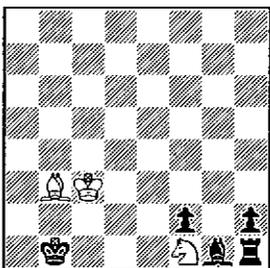
10 - win   **10a** - after 22...Kb1   **10b** - after 26 Bf1

The companion piece **10** is attributed to Carl. Play goes as before to **22 Kc3 Kb1** (see **10a**), but now a stalemate won't do and instead there is a changing of the guard: **23 Bd5 Ka1 24 Bc4 Kb1 25 Nd2+ Kc1 26 Bf1** and the bishop has taken over on f1 (see **10b**). The rest is routine: **26...Kd1 27 Nf3 Kc1 28 Nd4 Kb1 29 Nb5 Ka1 30 Na3 Ka2 31 Nc4 Kb1 32 Kd2 Ka1 33 Kc1 Ka2 34 Kc2 Ka1 35 Kb3 Kb1 36 Nb2 Kc1 37 Kc3 Kb1 38 Nd3 Ka1 39 Kb4 Ka2 40 Ka4 Ka1 41 Ka3 Kb1 42 Kb3 Ka1 43 Nc1 Kb1 44 Na2 Ka1 45 Ka3 Kb1 46 Bd3+ Ka1 47 Nc1 f1Q 48 Nb3 mate**.

My usual but nevertheless sincere thanks to Harold van der Heijden's invaluable "Endgame study database III". - JDB