

Learn From Your Chess Mistakes

Chris Baker

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Dedication:

To my wife Sunee who is my little diamond
(but wears a lot of gold!)

Introduction

In today's chess world there are many excellent books on opening systems, games collections of great players and generally on how to play well in both the middlegame and endgame. However, in this final category, books use wonderful masterpieces played by grandmasters as examples of how to play strong moves. While I'm sure this has merit, I believe it also has its limitations—as the test of time has shown. Firstly, even very strong players have difficulty at times in understanding and agreeing with published assessments—some of which may only appear as side-notes to sub-variations! Secondly, these publications can make very 'heavy reading' making it difficult to digest much of the information given. With this in mind I have written the present book, using mainly the games of 'ordinary' players from weekend tournaments and local league matches. As the mistakes in these games are often more pronounced and even blatant, the suggested improvements will make easier reading and be more digestible. I

have also attempted to round off this book with a little humour and a certain amount of 'tongue in cheek'—for your enjoyment! No offence is intended towards any of my 'victims', the majority of whom I hope will enjoy seeing their games in print—in some cases perhaps for the first time. I hope you will find the presentation of material quite logical, as it progresses through the opening, middlegame and endgame stages before finally dealing with one last general topic—a section of real 'howlers'. To help soften the blow for the victims included in this section, I've included one of my own most painful examples—after all, we're all human aren't we! Now and then there are paragraphs of text in which I give my thoughts and share my experiences and I hope the reader will find these thought-provoking. All in all, it is my sincere hope that you will find this work not only instructive but also an enjoyable read.

Chris Baker, *International Master*
Pattaya, Thailand
August 2002

Part One: Openings

Introduction

Any player who fails to give the opening stage of the game due respect can be likened to the type of person who would run a 100 metres race with his shoe laces undone! Being properly armed with opening knowledge will enable you to obtain *your* kind of game—with positions that you will not only be able to handle but also enjoy. After all, what could be more soul-destroying than being saddled with a position with no prospects whatsoever (though not one where you are justified in giving up the ghost) and having to sit there for the next 2, 3 or, in the case of some national events, up to 7 hours while your opponent tightens his grip? You know what's coming and yet are powerless to stop it. Wouldn't it be much better to invest some time early on so that *you* can be the one inflicting the pain rather than the one on the receiving end?

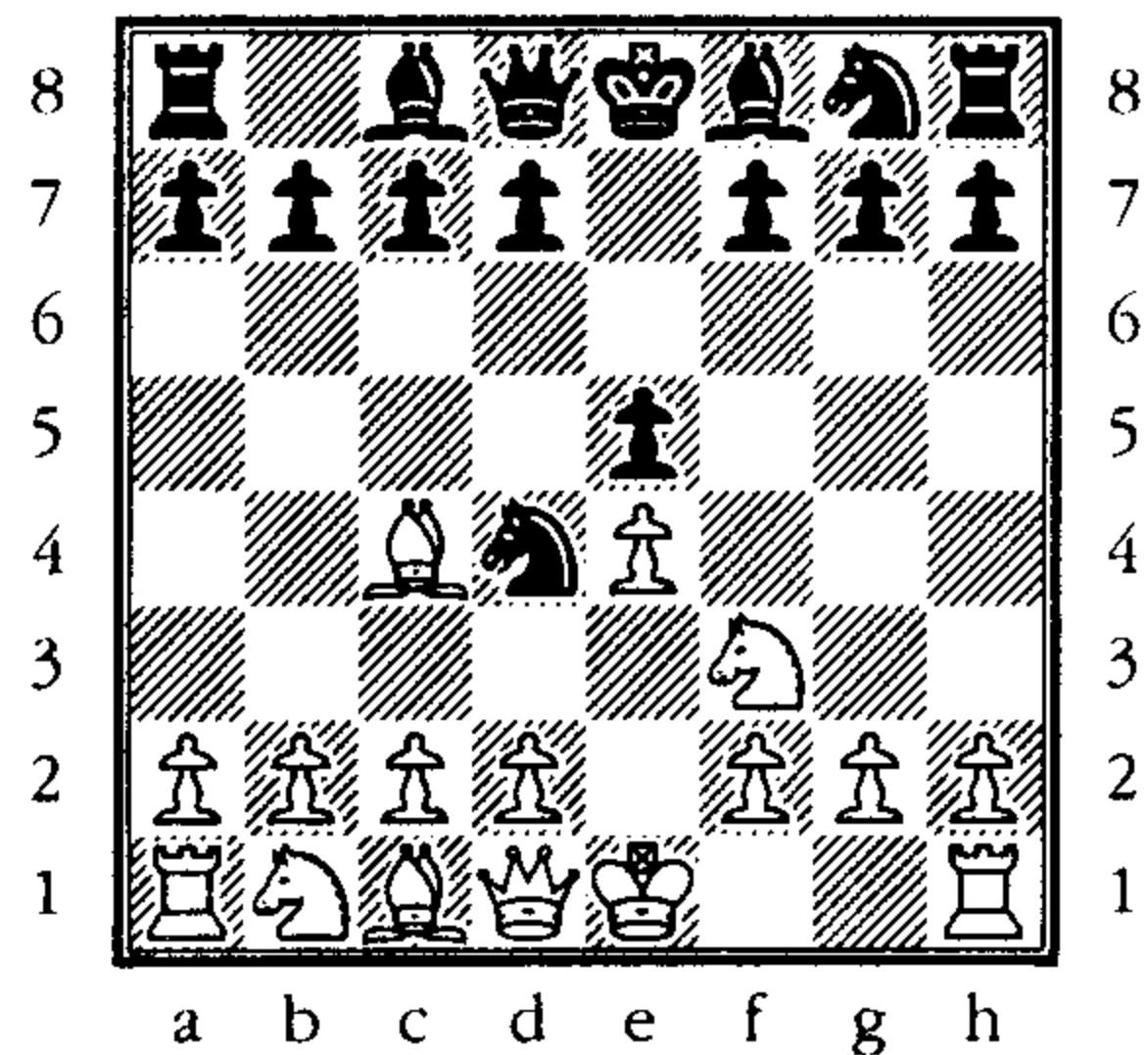
I am not going to recommend that you spend countless hours preparing for every opening eventuality—the amount of work you do in this area depends on your own commitment and your own priorities in life. Instead I will try to give you some ideas and concepts that will, to a certain extent, enable you to bypass the phenomenal amount of theory that is available on our beloved game.

1) Poor opening preparation

When I look at some analytical works, such as those by Kramnik, I am amazed at the amount of detailed knowledge of specific variations a player must have in order to claim some sort of edge out of the opening. Let's face it, though, most of us don't employ a team of analysts, constantly on the look out for ideas and plans that will change an assessment in a particular variation from equal to a small but durable edge. We have to take into account our own limited resources and the time we can justify putting into 'preparation', let alone actually playing. Though most club players have one or two 'pet' lines, what they really want is just to play some chess with a minimal amount of 'booking up'. Nevertheless one piece of advice I would give to these players is to treat their opponents with respect; when faced with something unusual or strange in the opening, give it some thought—unless your adversary is more or less a total novice he or she might just have some sort of 'trick' up their sleeve.

The 'people' in the following examples may be fictitious but they could easily be members of any 'ordinary' chess club in the country. Maybe I've just changed the names to protect the innocent—or is it the guilty(!) ... Just look at the following as a basic example:

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙c4 ♘d4?!



“Obviously just rubbish” said Frank at the club, when his seven year old opponent played 3...♘d4 after a suitably subtle pause. And, with a crisp bang, he placed his knight on e5, while removing the black e-pawn from the board...

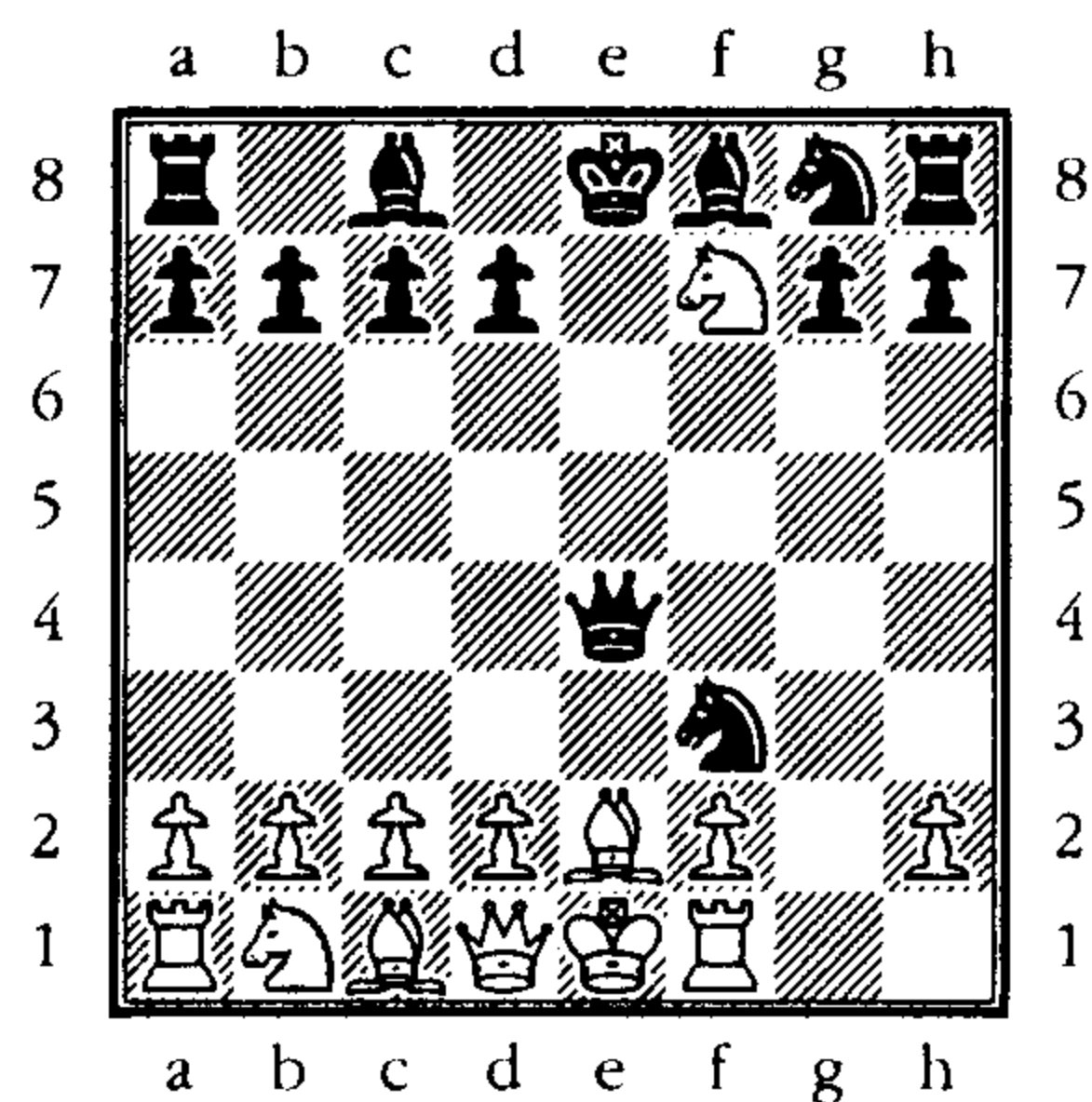
4 ♘xe5?

Though it seems logical, winning a pawn and threatening another on f7, this reply is bad and is the one move that Black was hoping for.

4...♙g5!

Threatening not only the knight on e5 but, as we shall see, a more sinister capture on g2.

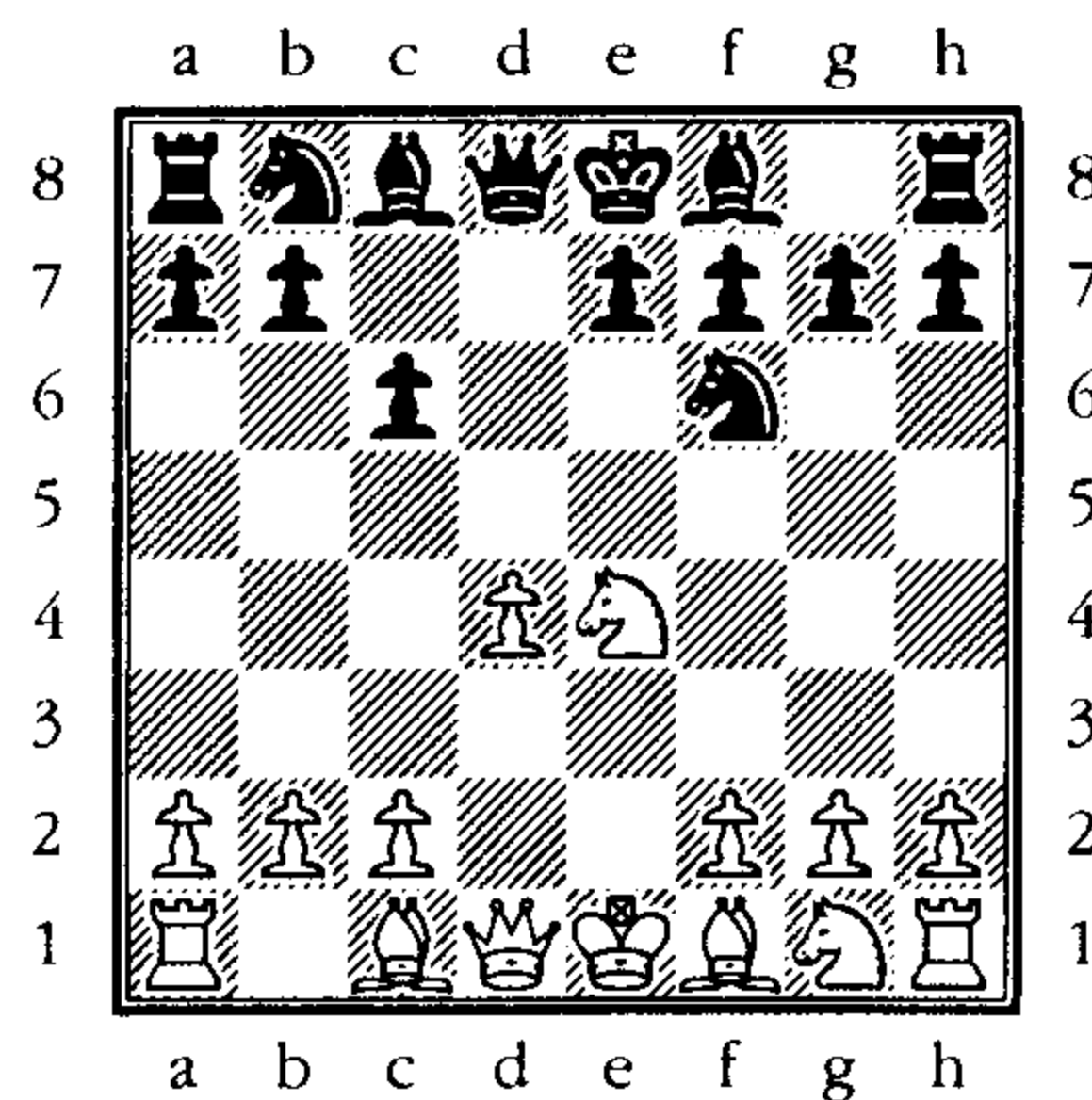
5 ♘xf7 ♙xg2 6 ♚f1 ♙xe4+ 7 ♙e2 ♘f3 mate



Whoops!! But, despite its success here, 3...♘d4 cannot really be recommended as it violates opening principles by moving the same piece twice within the first three moves—and it doesn't actually threaten anything either! With 3 c3 or 3 ♘xd4 White can keep an edge, albeit a relatively modest one. The one thing that he had to avoid was the ‘obvious’ capture of the undefended pawn. Maybe this example is a little too basic (although Frank might not agree!) but I see this kind of mistake virtually every night I visit a chess club.

For example:

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♘f6



5 ♘g3

Derrick knew that he could double the black pawns by playing 5 ♘xf6+ but he never seemed to be able to generate an advantage from the resulting positions. So, rather than ‘book up’, he decided to play a sensible move and ‘wing it’.

5...h5!?

Black has visions of ...h5-h4, gaining space and ‘kicking’ the knight, after all it has moved three times already to reach its present position and does not have any great squares to go to. However, Derrick thought that Black’s move was an over-reaction to his own knight retreat and represented a permanent weakening of Black’s kingside.

6 ♙g5

‘Threatening’ to double Black’s pawns, should he proceed with 6...e6. White is now ready to continue his development by 7 ♘f3, preventing, at least for the time being, any ideas of ...h5-h4 and so making Black’s previous move of ...h7-h5 look a little irrelevant. Derrick was pleased with his reasoning and analysis...

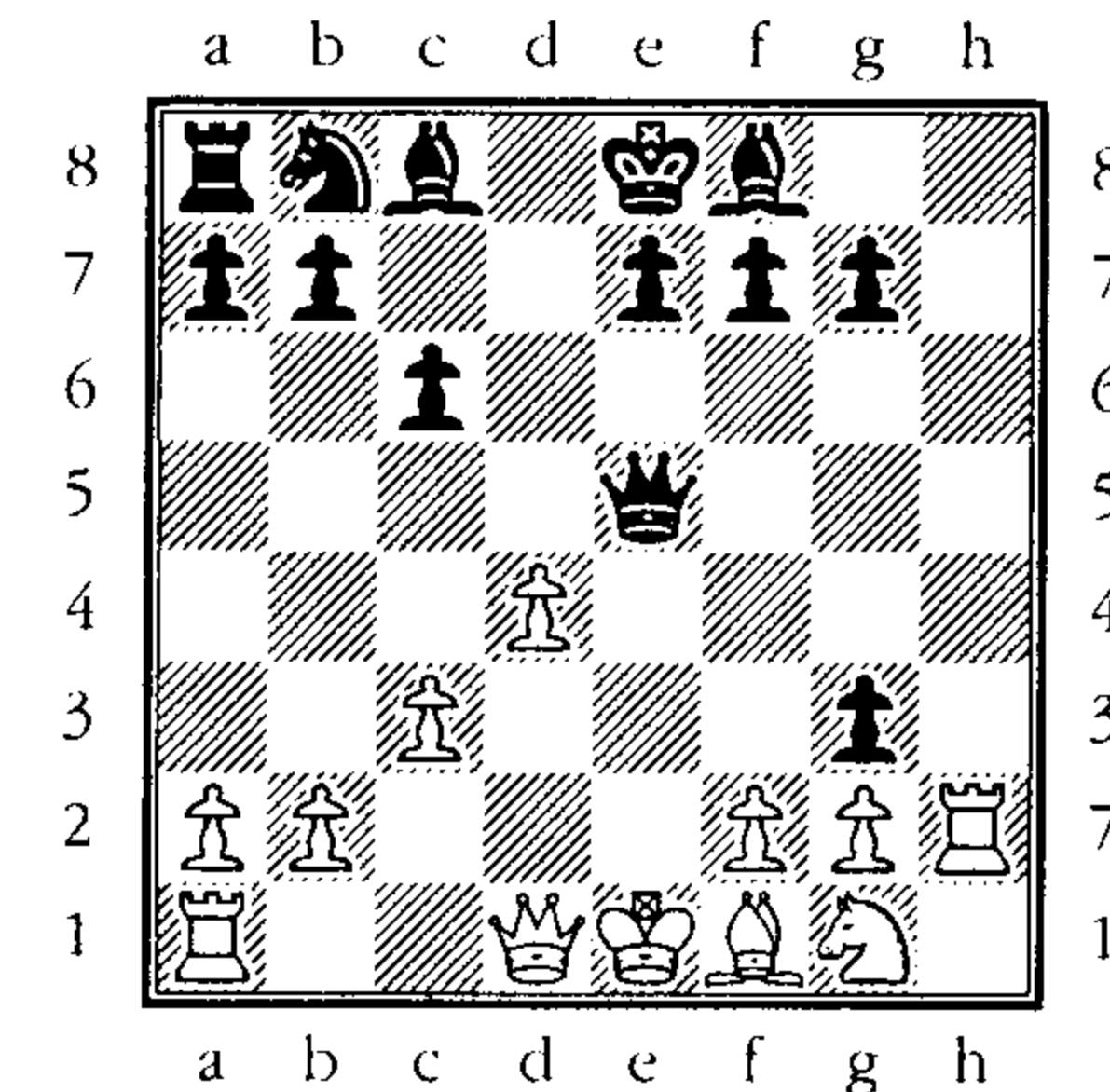
6...h4! 7 ♙xf6 hxg3 8 ♙e5 ♚xh2 9 ♚xh2

Now, after Black recaptures on h2, White can take back and claim to have a sensible position. But...

9...♙a5+

So...!?!

10 c3 ♙xe5+!!

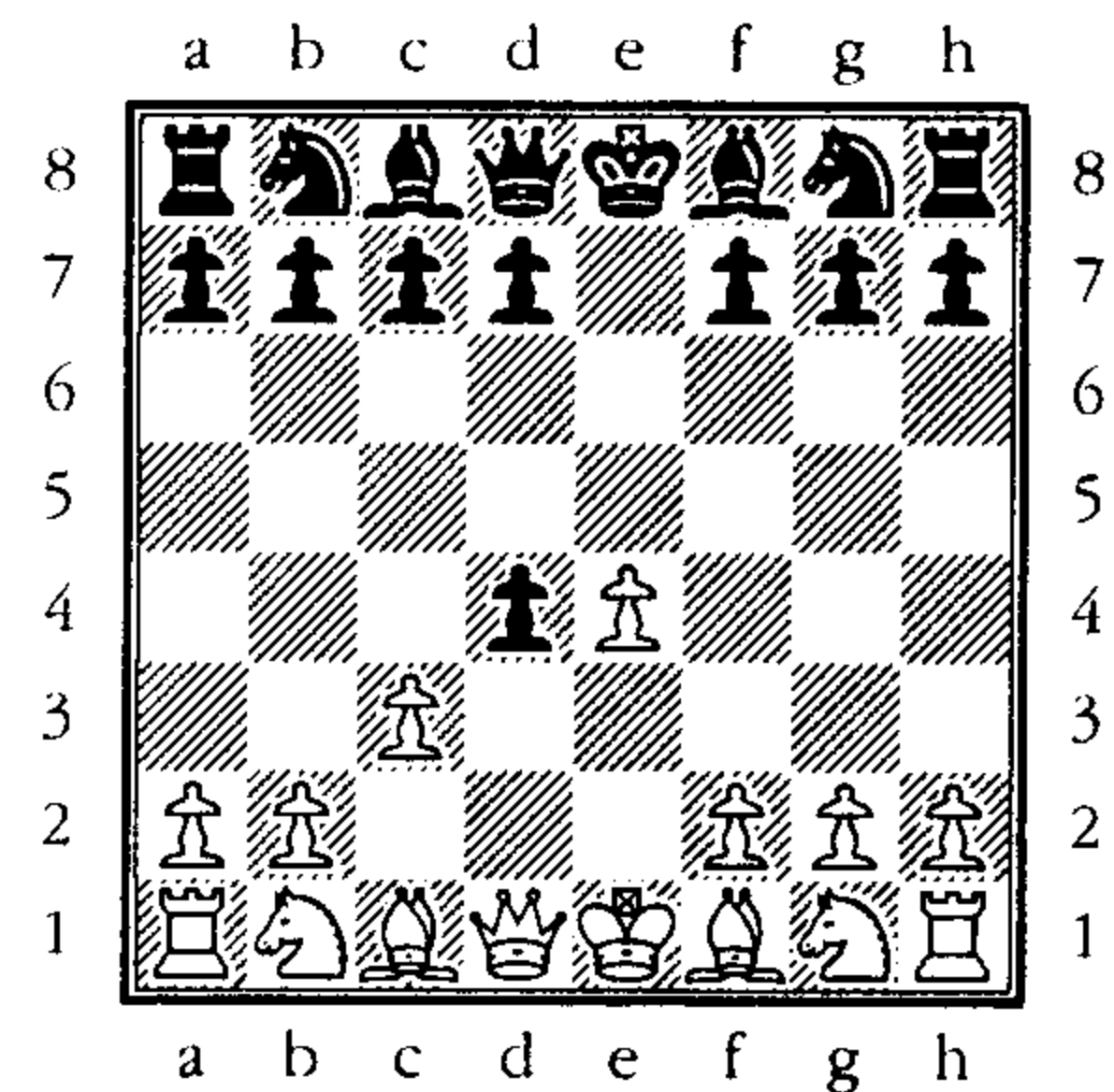


11 dxe5 gxh2

As Black will now queen and be a piece to the good, it didn't take long for White to give up on any serious resistance. “You were lucky!” said Derrick. “Yes,” said his rival, “it’s some time since any of my opponents have fallen for that one!”

Some gambits are notoriously dangerous and require good preparation to combat successfully—especially as Black when a single mistake can be fatal. In addition, more often than not a gambiteer will have a pretty good idea of what is going on in his chosen variation whereas the player on the receiving end may often only have some vague recollection of what he should play. For example:

1 e4 e5 2 d4 exd4 3 c3!?



White plans to give up some pawns (well they are only in the way aren't they!?) to gain development and open lines and diagonals.

3...dxc3 4 ♙c4 cxb2 5 ♙xb2 d5

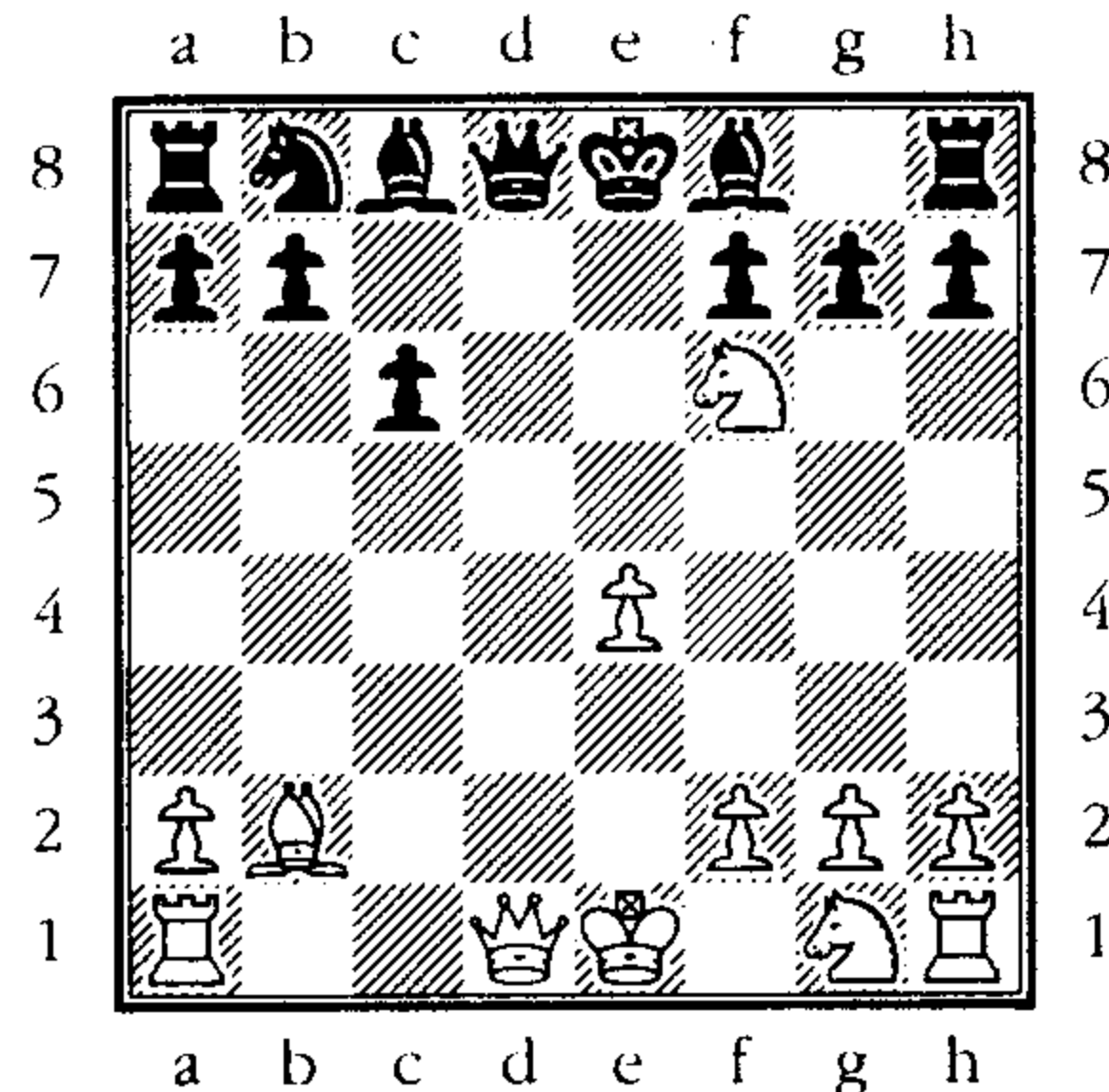
George knew enough about the opening to realise that he should make a timely return of some of his ill-gotten gains in order to reduce

White's activity and exchange some of his pieces.

6 ♖xd5 ♜f6 7 ♞c3 ♞xd5 8 ♞xd5 c6

George was happy, he 'knew' he had played the opening stage well... Now, after the knight retreated, he would exchange queens and, with the threats all but gone and his well placed pawn on c6 covering b5 and d5, he could look forward to the middlegame and endgame with some pleasure...

9 ♞f6+!!



9...♞e7

After 9...gxf6 White wins material with 10 ♜xd8+ ♞xd8 11 ♖xf6+. George was starting to feel less comfortable with his 8th move choice—in fact he felt a little empty space growing in the pit of his stomach!

10 ♖a3+ ♞e6 11 ♜g4+

George was expecting 11 ♜xd8 ♖b4+ 12 ♖xb4 ♜xd8 13 ♞h5 which is good for White—but the move played is even stronger.

11...♞xf6 12 e5+ ♞xe5 13 ♞f3+ ♞f6 14 ♜g5+ ♞e6 15 ♜e5+ ♞d7

16 0-0-0+ ♖d6 17 ♜xd6+ ♞e8 18 ♜xd8 mate

At least George had enough about him to ask his opponent after the game what he should have played and congratulate him on his excellent play and opening knowledge.

Getting lines mixed up or confusing variations is a constant source of trouble for club players. In fact no one is immune to this weakness. Here is one of my own efforts from a tournament some time ago. (N.B. I am not a fictitious character myself—although when I see my bank balance at times I wish I was!)

White: Jon Ady
Black: Chris Baker
Latvian Gambit

1 e4 e5 2 ♞f3 f5!?

The Latvian Gambit, currently not so fashionable as White seems to be able to demonstrate an advantage without allowing Black his much sought-after activity.

3 ♞xe5 ♞f6 4 d4 fxe4 5 ♞c3 d6 6 ♖g5!

Offering a temporary piece sacrifice thanks to the potential threats along the 'd'-file and against c7.

6...dxe5 7 dxe5 ♜xd1+ 8 ♜xd1 ♖g4?

Already on my own resources—now there's an admission in itself!—I strayed from well-trodden paths. I found out later that the 'main line' went 8...h6 9 ♖xf6 gxf6 10 ♞d5 ♞d7! 11 ♞b6+ (11 e6+!?) 11...♞c6 12 ♞xa8 and was assessed as unclear due to the trapped knight on a8.

9 ♖d2 h6

Here White let me off the hook by playing 10 ♖h4, after which I was able to 'fiddle around' with 10 ... g5, provoking enough complications to enable me to eventually win the game. However, if instead White had played...

10 ♖xf6 gxf6 11 ♞d5!

... I would have been in dire straits, mainly because, after 11...♞d7, White, instead of 12 ♞b6+, can play 12 ♞xf6+ and 13 ♞xg4 with a winning advantage. Having 'the Indian sign' on somebody can be a huge asset, leading to an opponent playing out of character, 'seeing ghosts' and generally falling to pieces for no apparent reason.

The following game has a little history behind it.

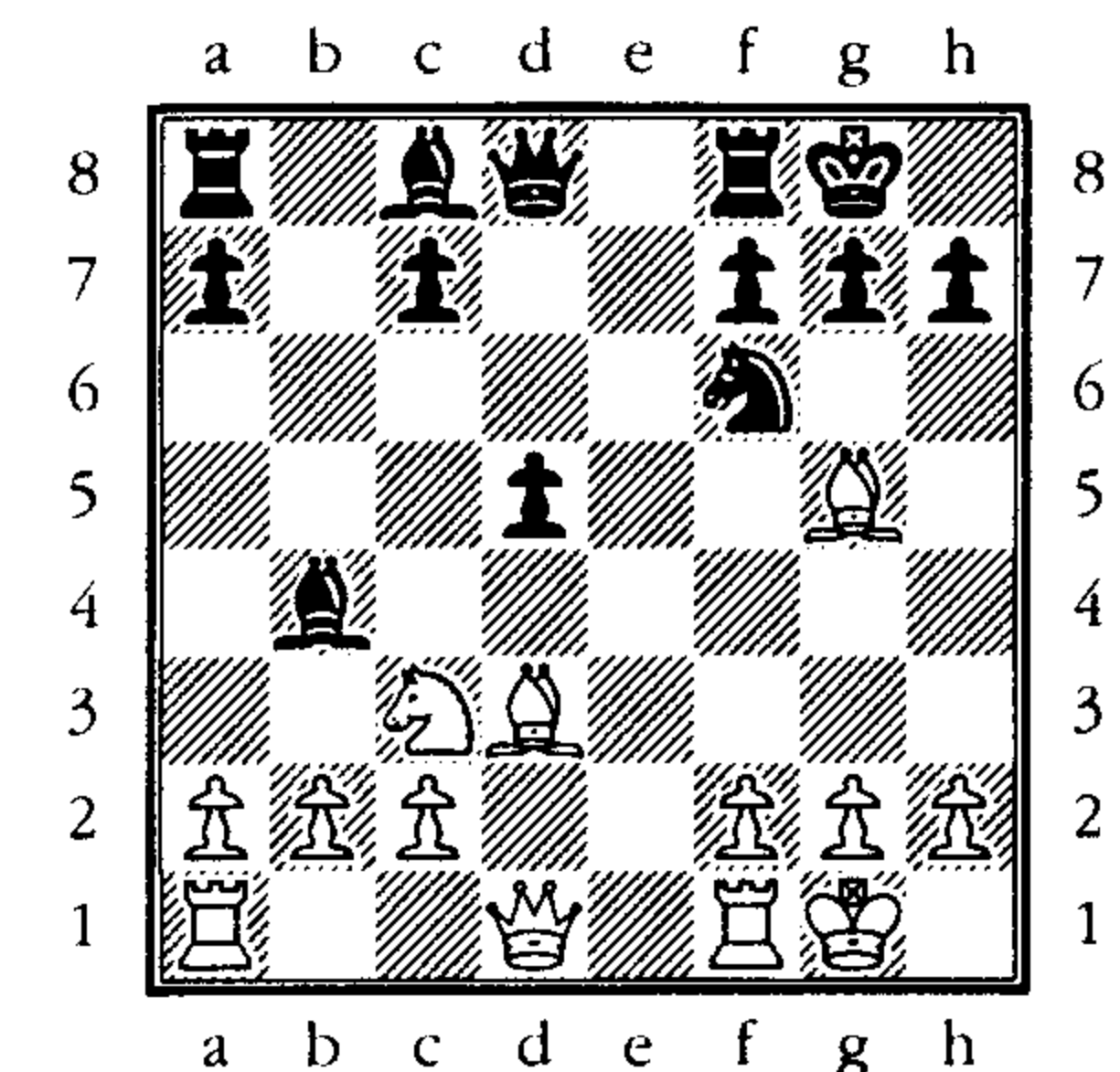
White: Chris Baker
Black: Alan Spice
Monmouth vs. The Gladiators,
Monmouth League 1998
Scotch Game

For this crucial match in the Monmouth league, the Gladiators' captain had brought out the 'big guns' of Alan Spice and John Trevelyn—but only to find that Monmouth had hired the 'hit men' of myself and Tyson Mordue. Tyson went on to win as Black in 15 moves (1 d4 ♞f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♞c3 ♖g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♖e2 0-0 6 ♖g5 c5 7 d5 h6 8 ♖f4 e6 9 dxe6 ♖xe6 10 ♖xd6 ♜e8 11 ♞f3 ♞c6 12 0-0 ♜a5 13 ♞d5 ♞xe4 14 ♞c7 ♜ed8 15 ♞xa8 ♞xd6 0-1)—could I go one better? Well I did have the white pieces!

1 e4 ♞c6

Alan is normally a French Defence player but, due to a severe 19 move defeat he had suffered against me in a previous game as Black in this opening, he decided, on the spur of the moment, to play something different. This in itself is not necessarily a good idea, though, to be fair, it is rather difficult to prepare for a game when you come up against an unexpected opponent! This leads on to another very interesting point. I remember once preparing for six or seven hours to meet Andrew Ledger with the white pieces in a 4NCL match—only to find myself sitting down to play Colin McNab. Now, while there is not a great deal of difference in their playing strength (and I say that with no disrespect to either player!) I was mentally shattered before playing even my first move. Easier said than done, I know, but in a similar situation my advice would be to take a break, drink a cup of tea or coffee and 'get your head straight'.

2 ♞c3 e5 3 ♞f3 ♞f6 4 d4 exd4 5 ♞xd4 ♖b4 6 ♞xc6 bxc6 7 ♖d3 d5 8 exd5 cxd5 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♖g5



All pretty 'standard stuff' and with 10...c6 the position would remain tense and balanced. But instead Black played...

10...g4??

Although this move may be positionally and developmentally correct, unfortunately it has the downside of being a beginner's tactical mistake.

11 xxf6 1-0

White will win a piece for nothing. Oh well, a short day at the 'office' for a change! Although I had done nothing wrong, I felt a little guilty after the game as this defeat seemed to depress Alan to the extent that he lost his enthusiasm to play chess for a while. However I'm glad to say he later made a comeback and is no doubt a stronger person for the experience.

The next game was very pleasing for me. It was played in the first round of an Elo tournament, where nerves are always a factor, and I was Black against a very talented and dangerous player. I knew I would have to be on top form to give a good showing and my opponent's poor opening preparation gave me just the start I needed to motivate myself and play one of my best ever games.

White: Miroslav Houska

Black: Chris Baker

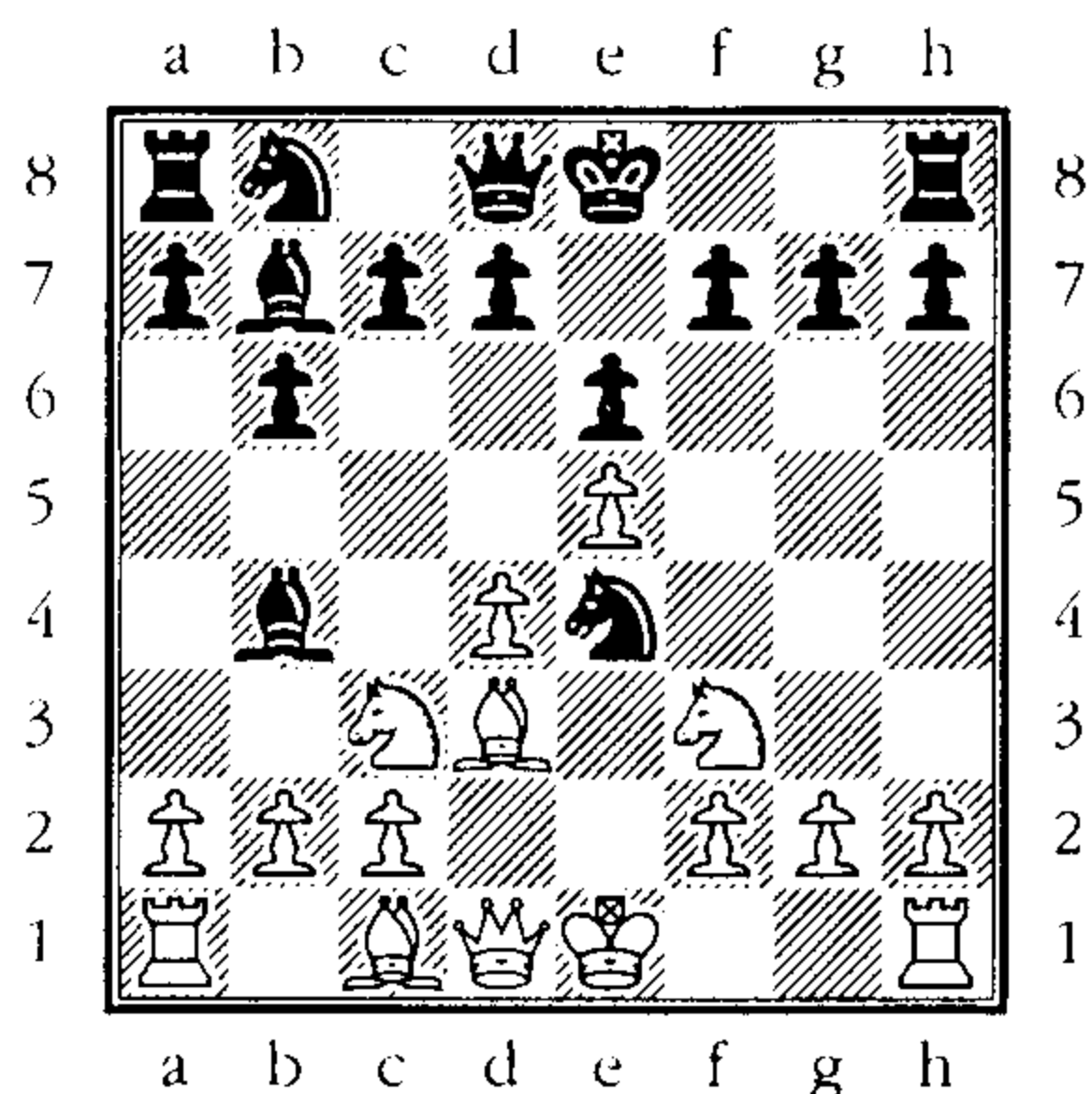
1st South Wales Masters 1998

Owen's Defence

1 d4 e6 2 f3 b6!? 3 e4 b7 4 c3 b4 5 d3 f6 6 e5

The alternatives are 6 e2 and 6 g5.

6...e4



7 d2?!

V.Akopian-J.Speelman, Olympiad, Moscow 1998, continued 7 0-0, offering a pawn—which Black declined after 7...xc3 8 bxc3 e7 and the game ended in a draw after 24 moves.

7...xd2 8 xd2 xf3 9 gxf3 c6

I was already happy with my position but accurate and active play was still needed to turn a satisfactory opening for Black into something more.

10 e4 f5!

Black doesn't fear the exchange 11 xc6 dxc6.

11 exf6 xf6 12 a3 d5! 13 axb4 dxe4 14 xe4

14 b5!? 0-0 is complex but favours Black.

14...xf3 15 g3 0-0-0 16 c3 e5 17 b5 exd4!

24 c1

Obviously White can't play 24 f3 because of 24...d2 mate.

24...xb2 25 d1 xd1+

25...b4+! is even stronger than the move played as after 26 d2 xd2 27 xd2 d8 White can 'pack his bags'.

26 xd1 xe3 27 fxe3 b3+ 28 d2 b4+ 29 d1 a4+ 30 d2 xc6 0-1

Our last example in this section shows how just playing 'sensible' moves is not good enough in sharp opening lines.

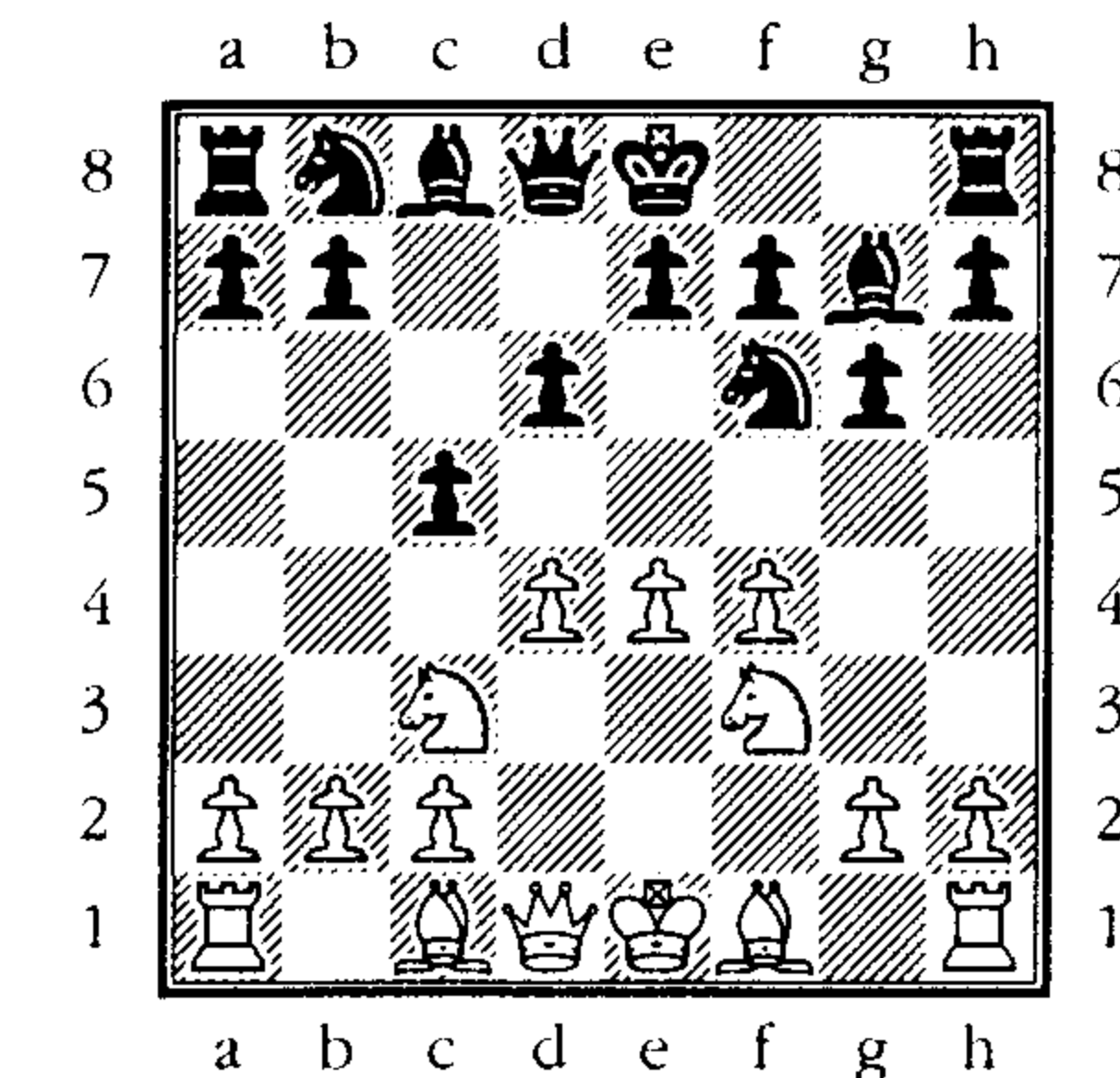
White: L.Cheung

Black: Chris Beaumont

Bristol League Congress Open 1998

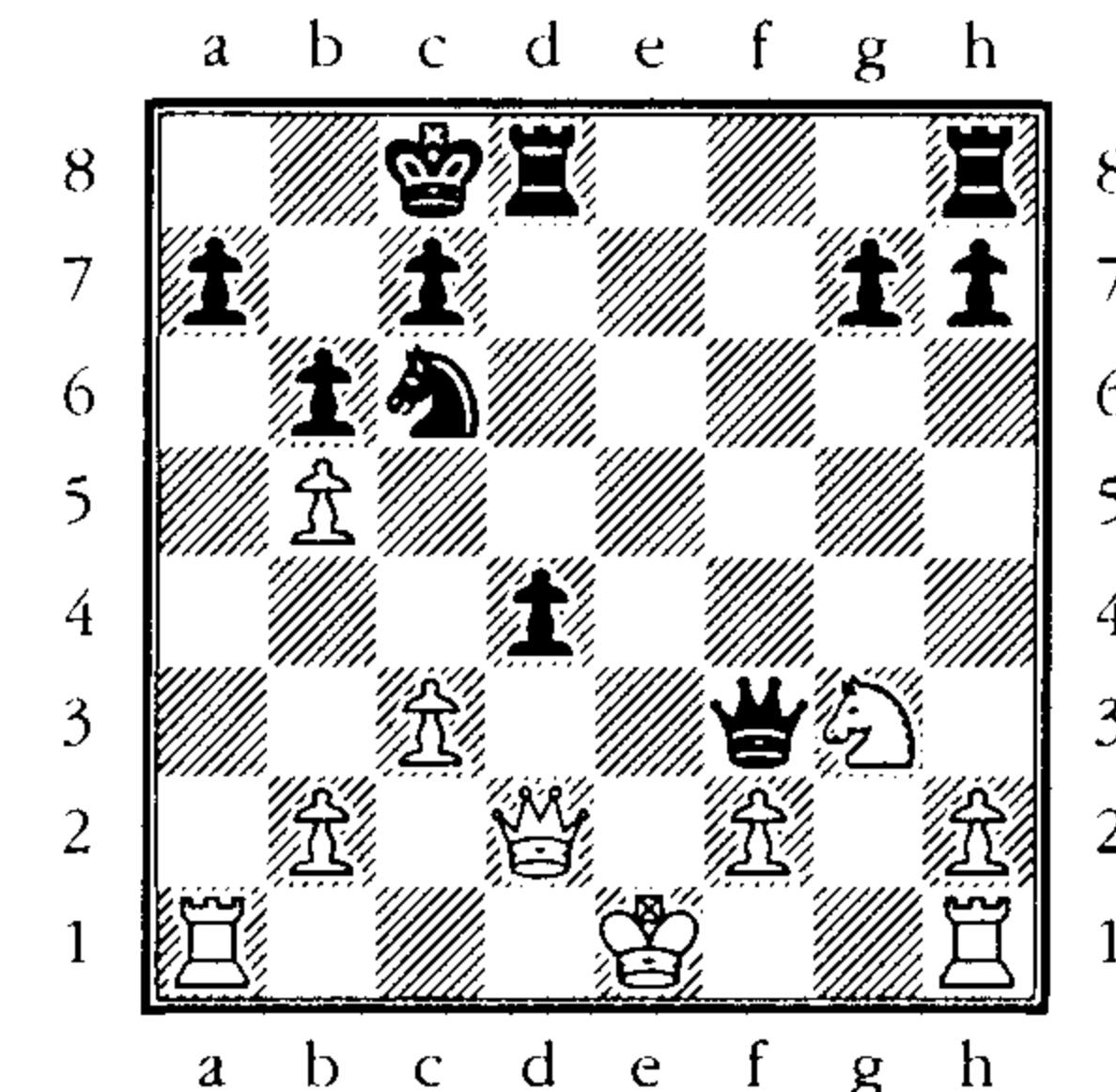
Pirc Defence

1 e4 g6 2 d4 g7 3 c3 d6 4 f4 f6 5 f3 c5



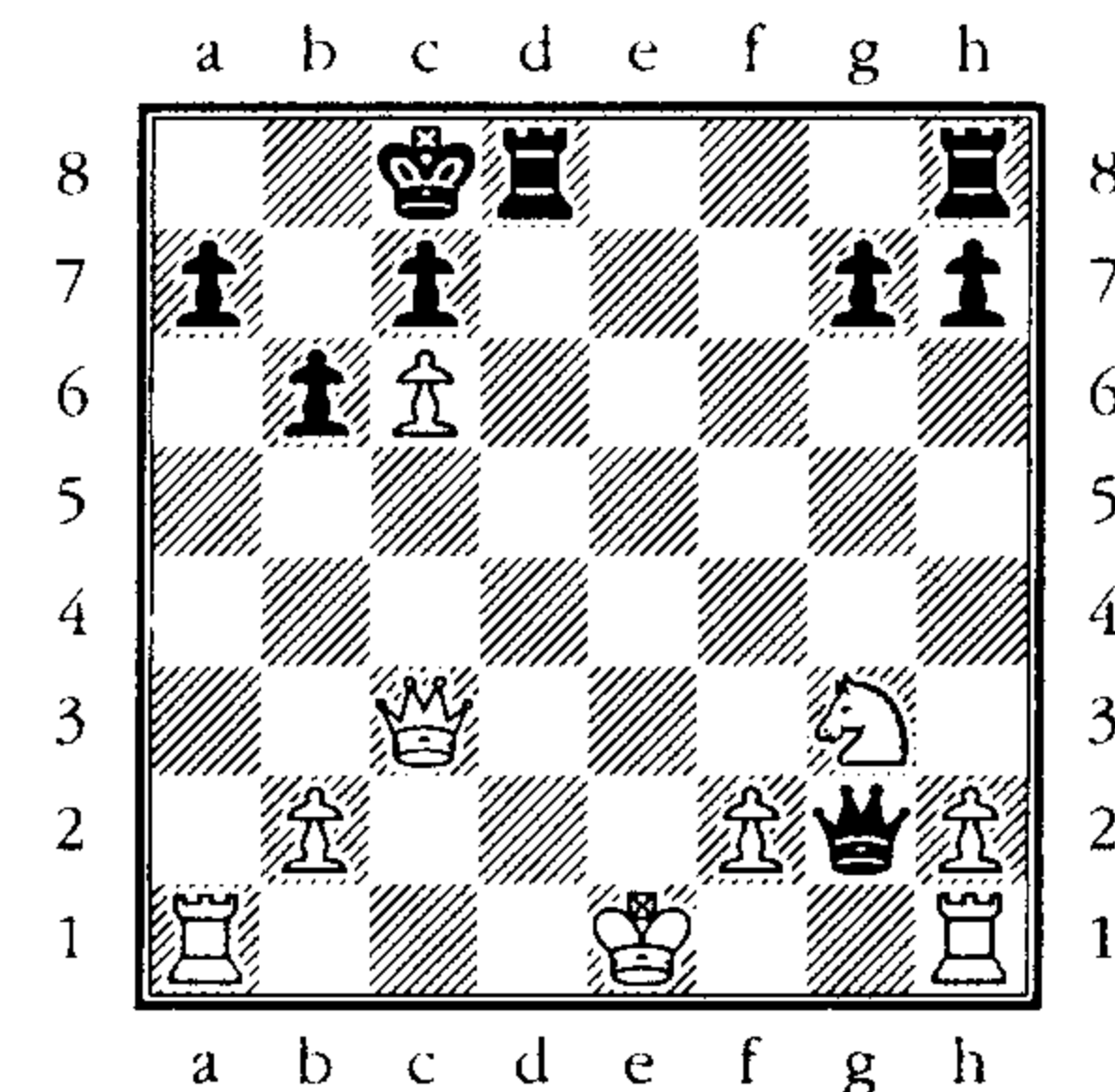
6 e3!?

The main line is 6 dxc5 a5 7 d3 to guard e4. Then 7...xc5 8 e2 so as to play c1-e3, driving the black queen off the g1-a7 diagonal and then castling kingside.



I was very pleased with this piece sacrifice as it involved a far from obvious key move two moves later.

18 bxc6 dxc3 19 xc3 g2!!



This is the point: White is now unable to get his king to safety. Yet it was the strength of this simple move, not involving any capture, that I needed to appreciate when sacrificing the piece.

20 f1 he8+ 21 e2 e4

Threatening the obvious.

22 h3+ b8 23 e3 c2

Now White is helpless against all of the threats.

Many games have been played in this variation and Black's results have been quite satisfactory.

6...cxd4 7 dxd4 0-0 8 e2 c6

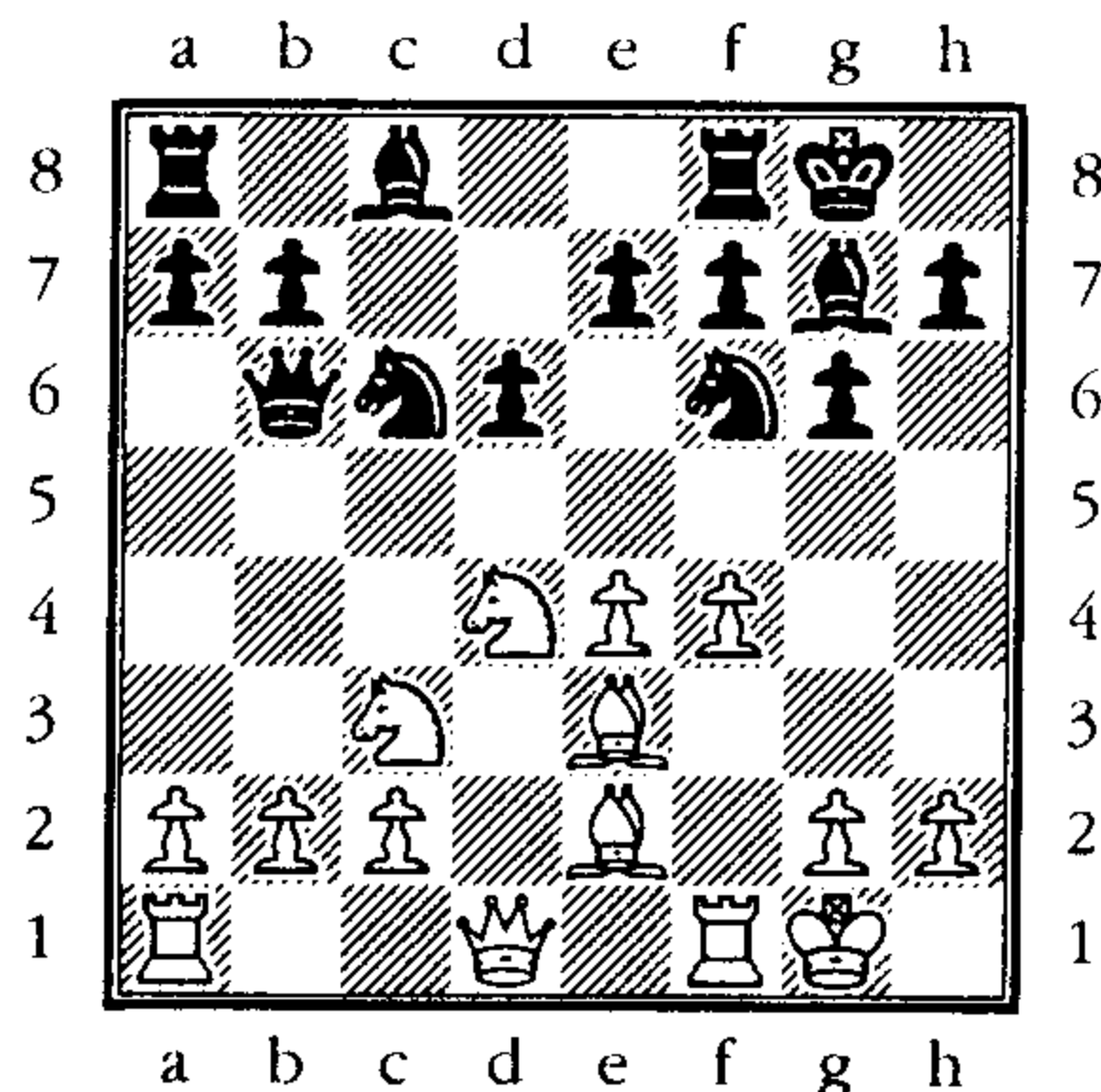
By transposition we have reached the Levenfish variation of the Sicilian Dragon which has lost popularity over the years.

9 0-0?!

9 d3 is the 'safe' move.

9...b6!

Black generates threats along the g1-a7 and a1-h8 diagonals as well as attacking b2.



10 f5??

Losing material. Now White 'sinks without trace'.

Other moves tried in the position are:

a) 10 b1 xe4!;

b) 10 a4 a5 11 c3 which, to say the least, lacks ambition!;

c) 10 d3 g4 leads to a complicated position but practice has favoured Black and it is obvious from the game that Black 'knows his stuff' while White is 'winging it'.

10...xb2 11 xg7 xc3 12 f3? g4 0-1

2) Being over-prepared and getting 'stale'

At times playing the same openings and variations month in month out, year in year out leaves us stale. At one time I hadn't lost with my favourite variation against the French Defence in a competitive match for nearly fifteen years but then all of a sudden my results deteriorated. In retrospect I put this down to a state of 'going through the motions', that is to say whenever my opponent played the French, I would wheel out my pet line and only when he varied from my 'book' did I start to think. Actually it was worse than that, even when my opponents played something new I didn't really stop to think—this is playing 'stale' chess at its worst. To combat this it was necessary to play something new and to rethink some of my ideas and strategies in my 'pet' line in order to gain new energy and perspectives in the resulting positions. The next three games show three separate stages in this process.

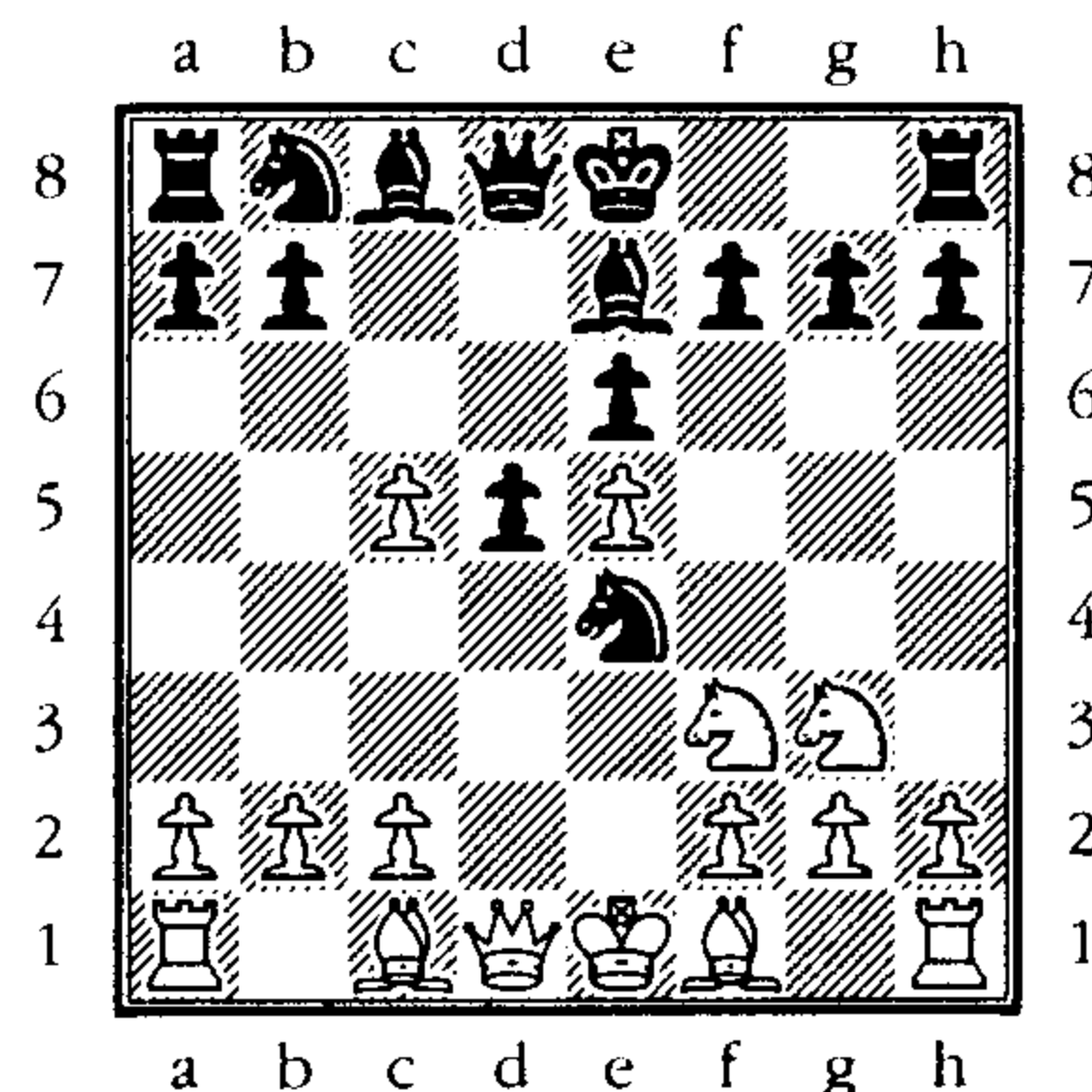
Stage one: playing stale chess due to over-preparation:

White: Chris Baker
Black: Simon Williams
4NCL, Kenilworth 1998
French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 f3 d5 3 c3 f6 4 e5 de4!?

After the main line, 4...fd7, I like to transpose to a Steinitz variation with 5 d4.

5 de2 c5 6 d4 e7 7 g3 c5 8 dxc5?!



As we shall see in the next game, this is not the best as it releases central tension and control without getting anything in return.

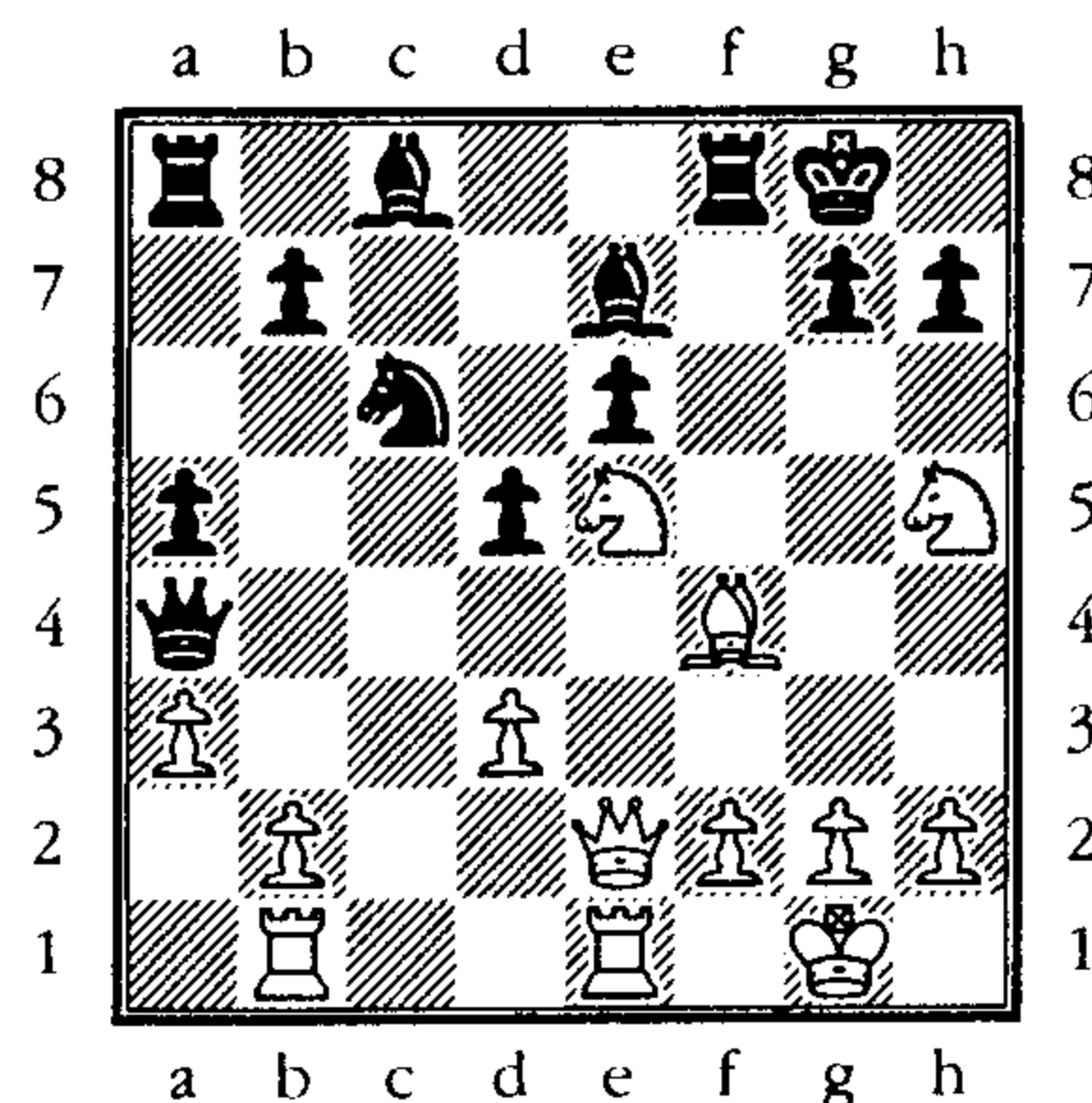
8...c7 9 d3 xc5 10 0-0 c6 11 e1 xd3 12 cxd3 0-0 13 f4

13 g5!?

13...b6 14 b1 a5 15 h5 f5 16 exf6 xf6 17 d2 b4 18 e2 e7 19 a3 a4

Black has played lots of sensible moves while White has just been 'treading water'. My next move was simply losing but, not having any real ideas or plans, I had already lost the thread of the position.

20 de5??



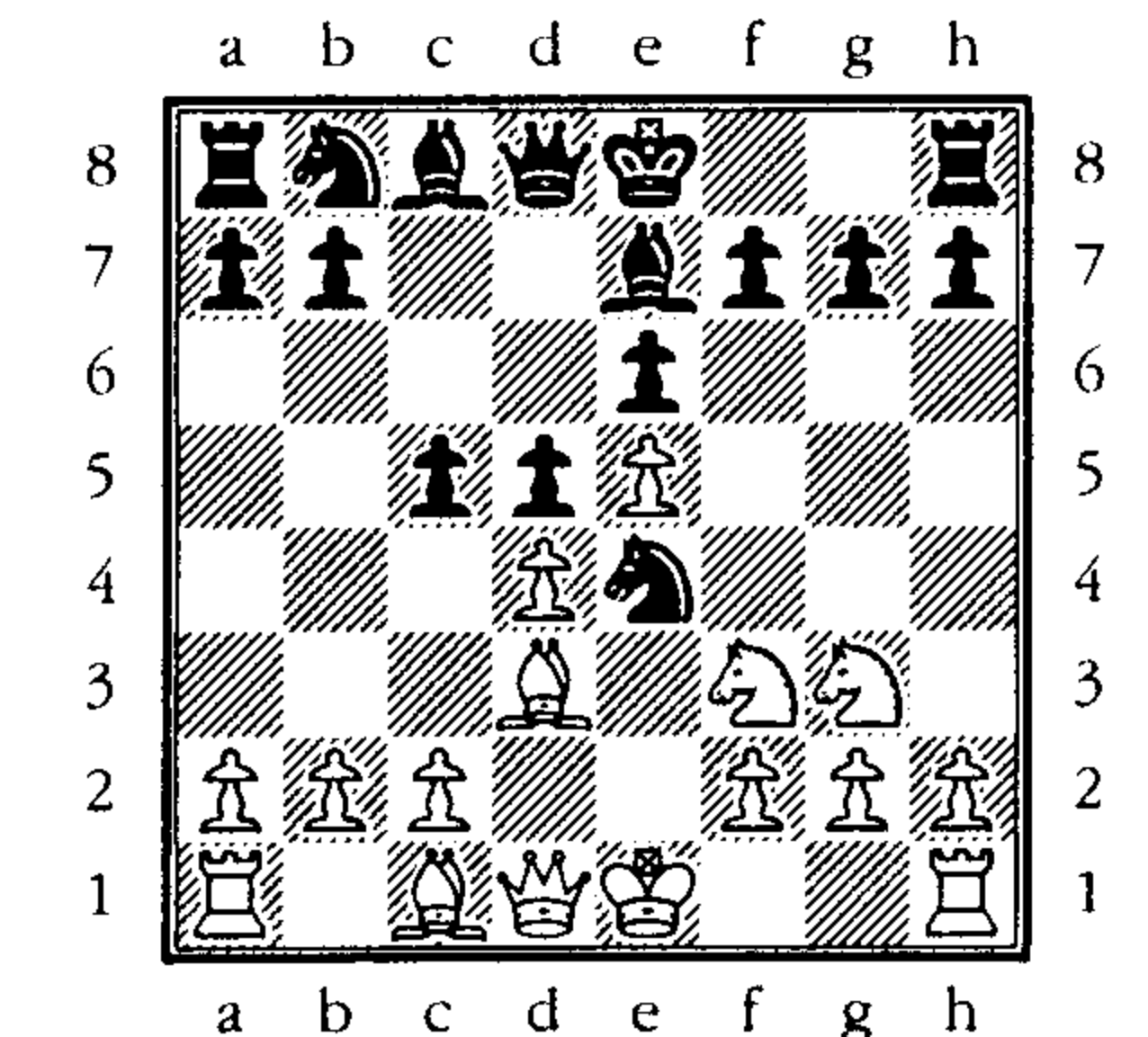
20...xf4 21 xc6 bxc6 22 xf4 xf4

From here on, Black played the position carefully and won without too much trouble.

Before returning to my favourite variation I mended some of the 'holes' as the following game shows:

White: Chris Baker
Black: Neil Dickenson
4NCL, Birmingham 1999
French Defence

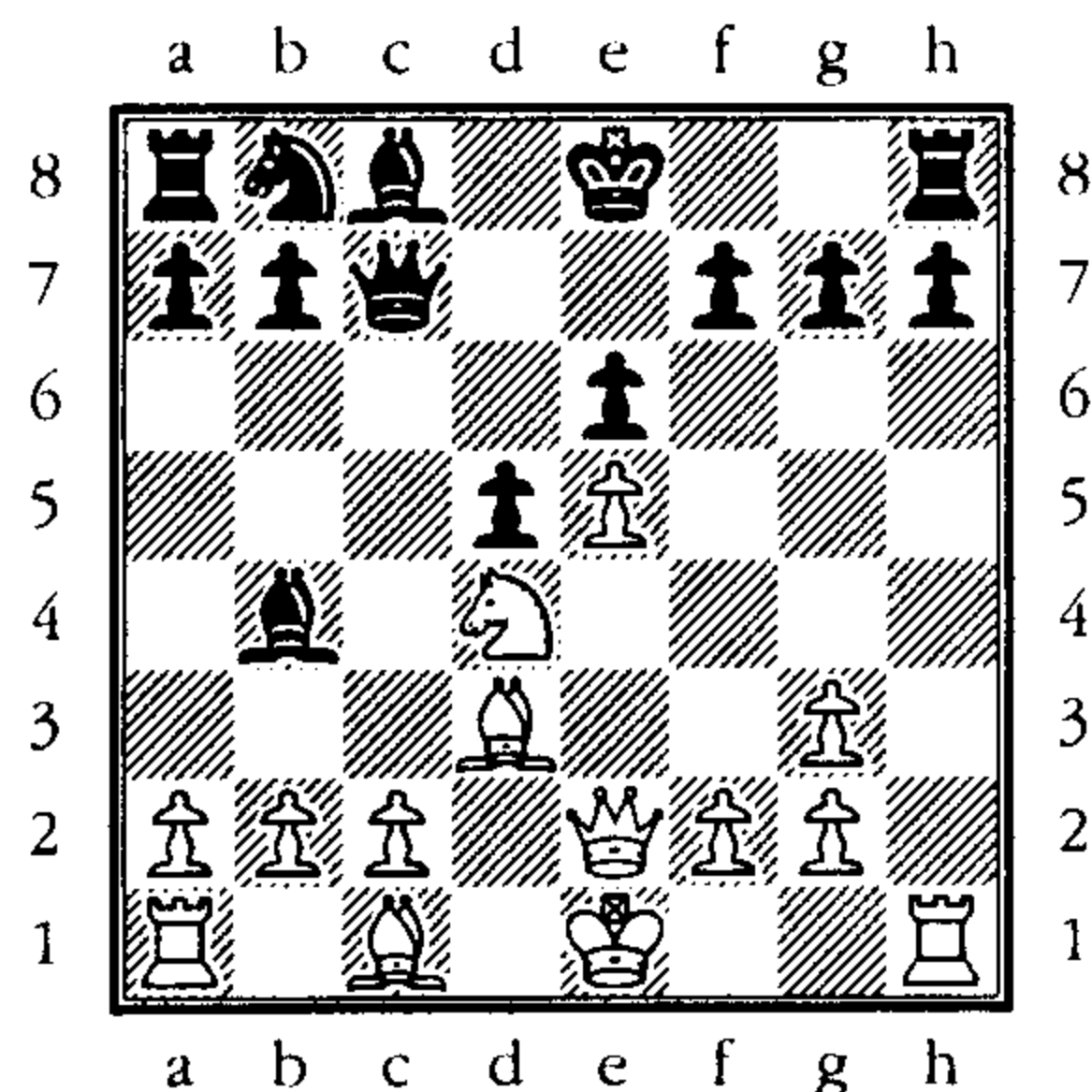
1 e4 e6 2 f3 d5 3 c3 f6 4 e5 de4!?



As I was prepared to repeat the variation, it should have been obvious that I had something new (better!) in mind. But, then again, perhaps my opponent wasn't aware of the history of the variation—if not he should have been!

8...xg3 9 hxg3 cxd4 10 xd4 xc7 11 e2 b4+?

This is wrong in principle as it exchanges off White's 'bad bishop' while leaving Black with some bad long-term dark square weaknesses.



12 ♕d2

Even stronger would have been 12 c3!! ♕xc3+ 13 bxc3 ♖xc3+ 14 ♖d2 ♖xa1 15 f4 which is immensely powerful for White due to the threat of 16 ♖b3 trapping the queen. However, to be honest, I had missed 15 f4 and therefore didn't enter the variation.

12...♕xd2+ 13 ♖xd2

White still has a pleasant position due to his lead in development, safer king and better bishop.

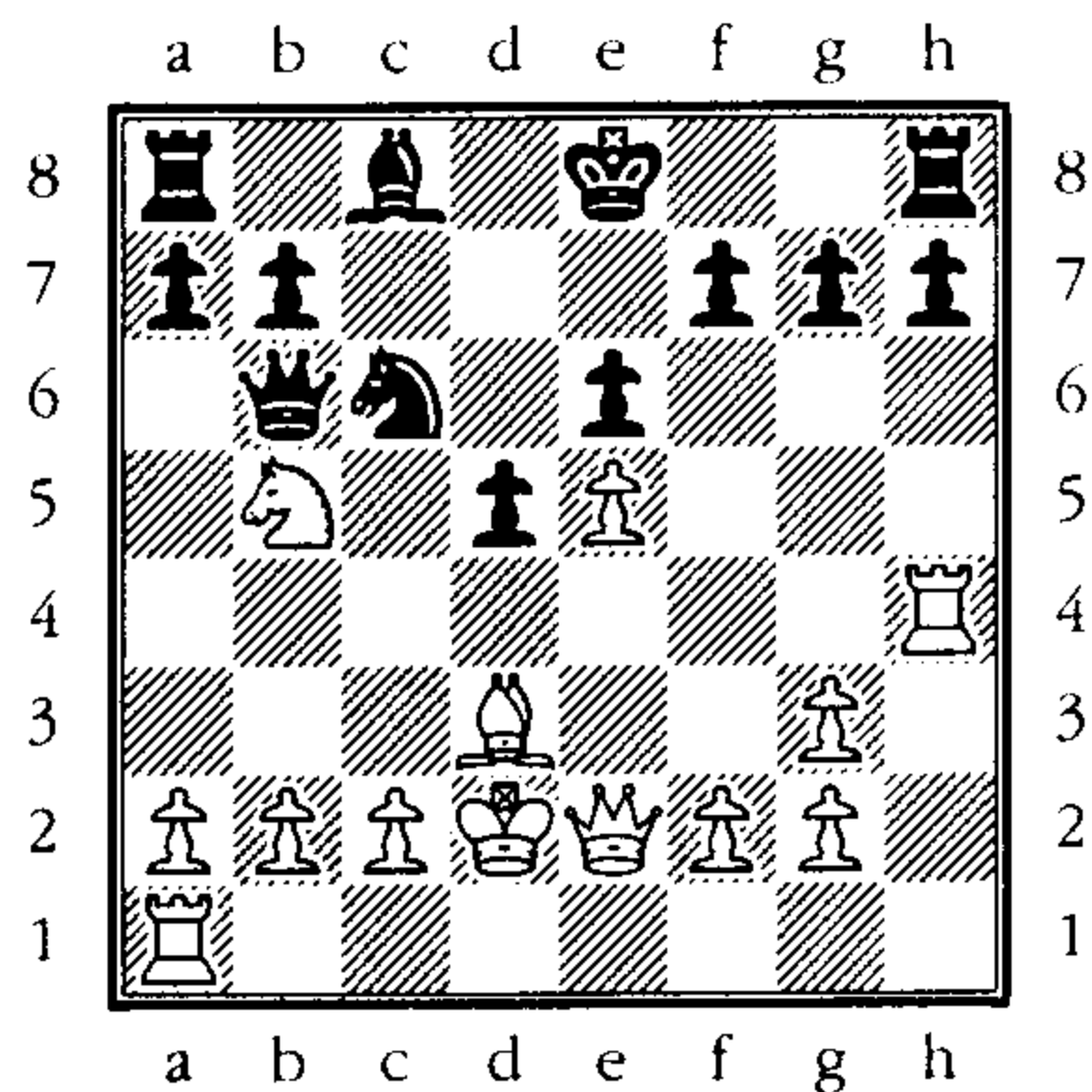
13...♖c6?!

Black's position is already close to collapse and so he tries to lure White into committing his pieces in the hope that this will turn out badly.

14 ♖b5 ♖b6

I was expecting 14...♖a5+ 15 ♖c1 when I felt that White is still better—although there is still a lot of chess to be played. Possibly better is 15 c3!/? but after 15...d4 I was worried that Black could work up some counterplay against my king.

15 ♖h4!



I liked this move as it protects the fourth rank while also threatening to swing over the rook to the 'f' or 'g'-file or double up on the 'h'-file, as appropriate.

15...♕d7 16 ♖e1!

I wanted to discourage ...♖c6xe5, while bringing my last piece into the game.

16...♖a5+

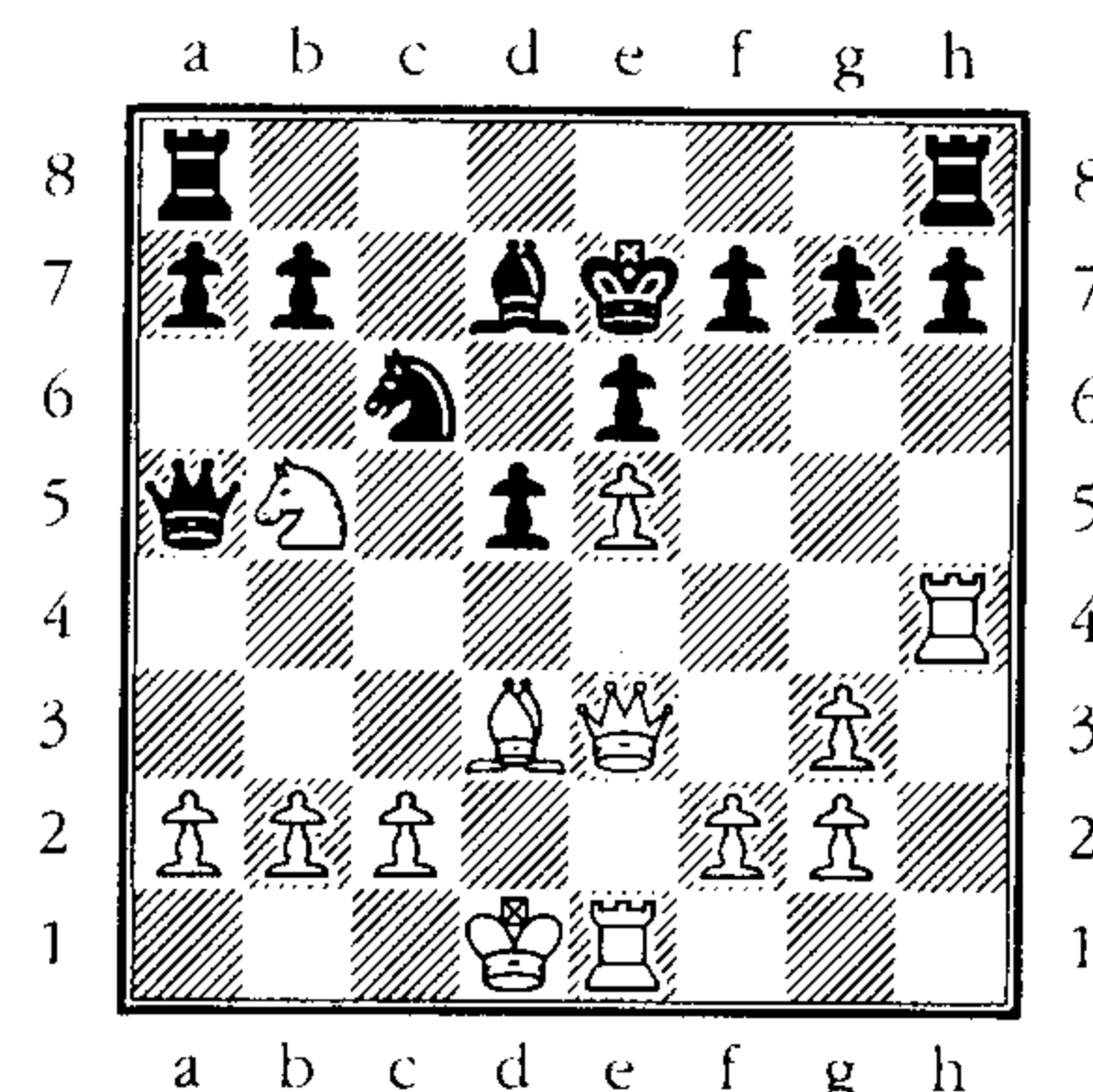
Now after 16...♖xe5 17 ♖xe5 ♕xb5 18 ♖xg7 (I was trying to make 18 ♖b4 work but after 18...a6 19 a4 ♖xf2+ 20 ♖e2 ♖c5 White has nothing special) 18...0-0-0 19 ♕xb5 ♖xb5 20 ♖xf7 ♖xb2 21 ♖xe6+ ♖b8 22 ♖e5+ leads to a strong ending for White.

17 ♖d1! ♖e7?!

17...♖f8 was necessary although White still has a good position.

18 ♖e3!

Exploiting the dark square weaknesses in Black's position.



18...h6?

Little better is 18...♖xa2 when after 19 ♖c5+ ♖d8 20 ♖d6 ♕e8 21 ♖b4! b6 (21...♖xb4? 22 ♖xb7+ ♖d7 23 ♕b5+ ♖c6 24 ♖xc6+ ♖e7 25 ♖d6 mate) 22 ♖xf7+ ♖c8 23 ♖d6! Black's position falls apart.

19 ♖c5+ ♖d8 20 ♖f4 ♖xa2 21 ♖xf7 ♖b1+ 22 ♖d2 ♖xb2 23 ♖xd7+ ♖xd7 24 ♖d6+ ♖e8 25 ♕g6 mate

What is apparent to me is not just the different result from that against Simon Williams but the sheer energy with which I had played against Neil Dickenson—every move seemed to have a purpose towards the final goal. I enjoyed the game and felt it was a worthy demonstration of my play at its best.

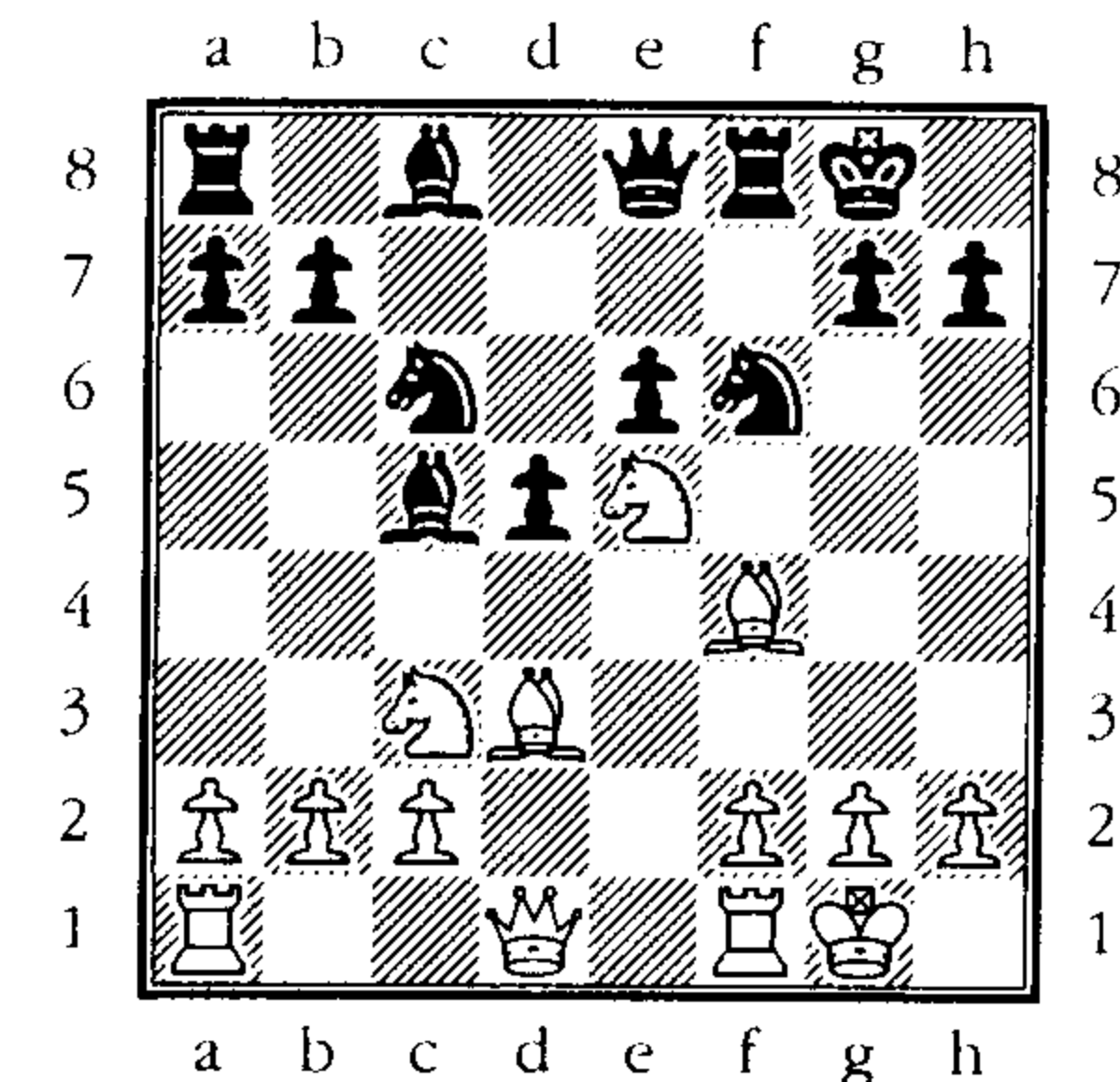
The last of the trio of games in my pet line adds a further dimension to appreciating a position. In a cup game, having realised that I was going to play with the black pieces against an opponent who also played this line, I felt compelled to try a particular variation to see how he would handle it and what ideas he would have in the key position.

White: Julien Shepley
Black: Chris Baker
Coulsdon vs. Guildford,
Cup Match, Ashted 1999
French Defence

1 ♖c3 d5 2 e4 e6

Transposing back to the Two Knights' variation of the French as I had planned.

3 ♖f3 ♖f6 4 e5 ♖fd7 5 d4 c5 6 dxc5 ♖c6 7 ♕f4 ♕xc5 8 ♕d3 f6 9 exf6 ♖xf6 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♖e5 ♖e8!/?



The classical move is 11...♕d7 but the text has some interesting points.

12 ♖b5!/?

New to me. The critical line has always been 12 ♖xc6 bxc6 13 ♖a4! ♕e7 (13...e5 14 ♖xc5 exf4 15 ♖e1 ♖f7 16 ♖f3 g5 17 ♖e5 h6 18 h3) 14 c4!/? with a tense middlegame position.

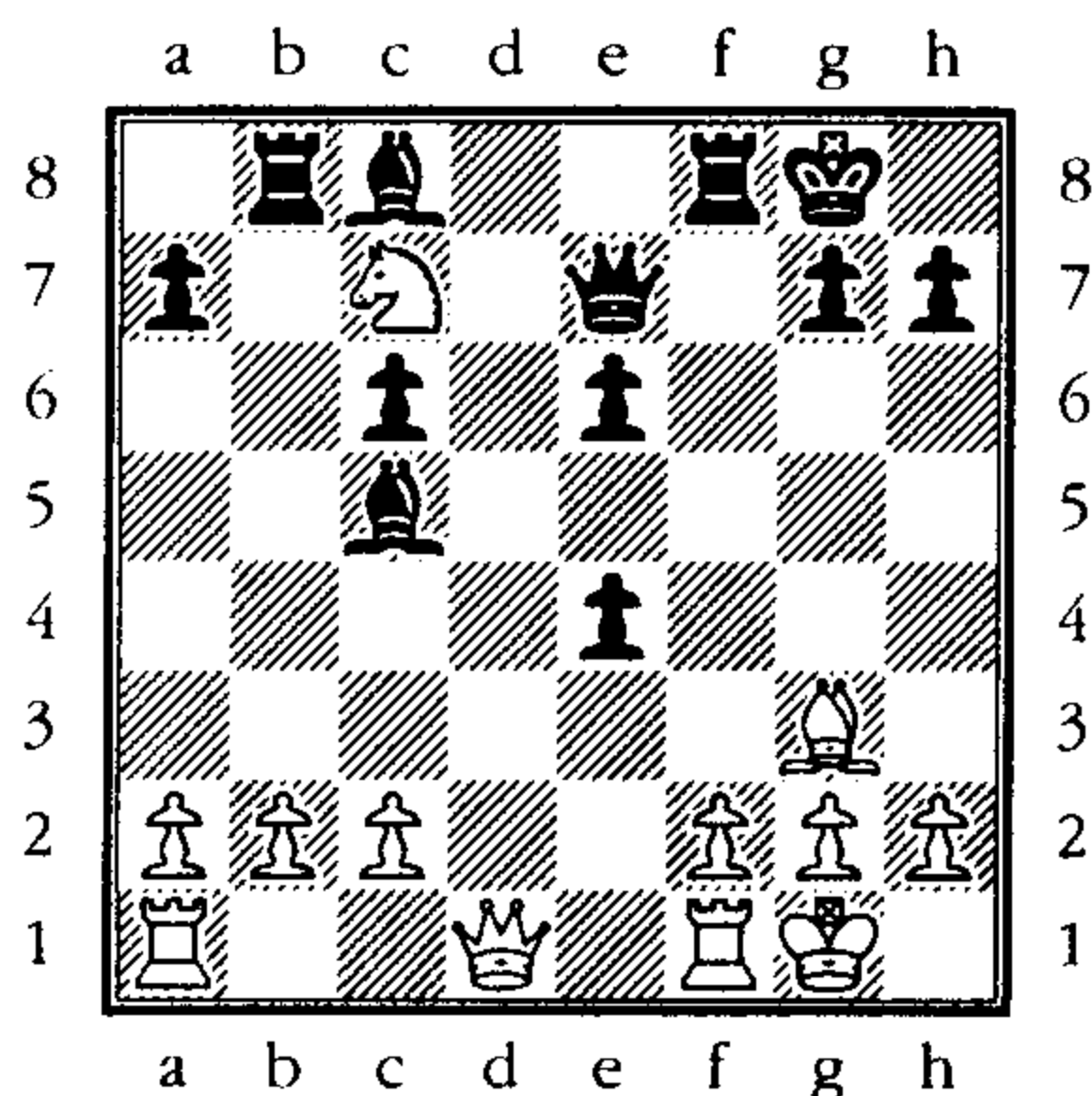
12...♖e4!/?

Attempting to find a tactical flaw in White's previous move.

13 ♕xe4 dxe4 14 ♖c7 ♖e7 15 ♖xc6

After 15 Qxa8 Rxf4 16 Qc4 (16 Qxc6 bxc6 17 Wd2 Rxf2! 18 Rxf2 e3 and White has problems) 16...b6 17 Wd2 Rf8 Black is fine as White's knight on a8 is in big trouble.

15...bxc6 16 Qg3 Rb8



Now White has a problem, he hasn't gained any material advantage but his knight on c7 is still in danger.

17 We2 Qd6!

Removing the knight's protector.

18 Qxd6 Wxd6 19 Qa6 Rb6

The rest, as they say, is a matter of technique!

20 Rad1 We5 21 f4 Qxa6 22 fxe5 Qxe2 23 Rxf8+ Qxf8 24 Re1 Qh5 25 Rxe4 Qg6 26 Rc4 Rxb2 27 Rxc6 Rxc2 28 Rxe6 Rxa2 0-1

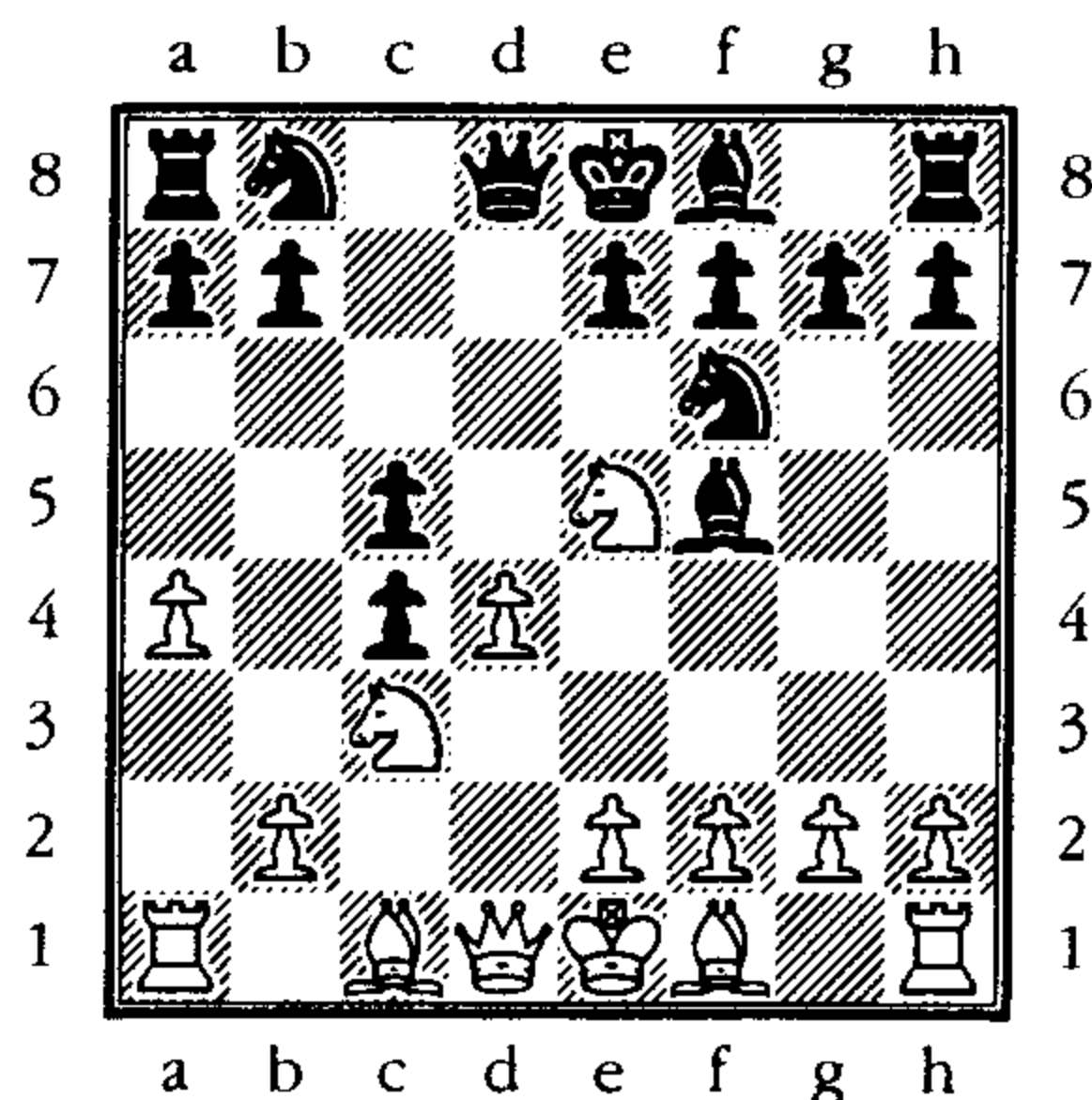
It was satisfying to play, as Black, a variation in which I had depth of knowledge through playing against it as White! I had managed to put away a dangerous opponent with the minimum of risk.

3) Being caught by an opponent's preparation

When playing 'sharp' variations a deep knowledge and understanding of the variation employed is essential in order to avoid disaster. To achieve this, a well written book explaining the themes backed with up to date 'test games' should be used as your 'reference' and to complete the picture you should 'keep up with the times' by monitoring recent games involving strong players. This is where the use of 'Chessbase' or 'Fritz' and a database source such as TWIC (The Week In Chess) is of such use. The present book is not intended to be an opening reference work but, by way of illustration, I've decided to show the amount of analysis you need to know to counter an 'unusual' 6th move by Black in a main line of a 'normal' opening defence.

Opening study: Slav Defence

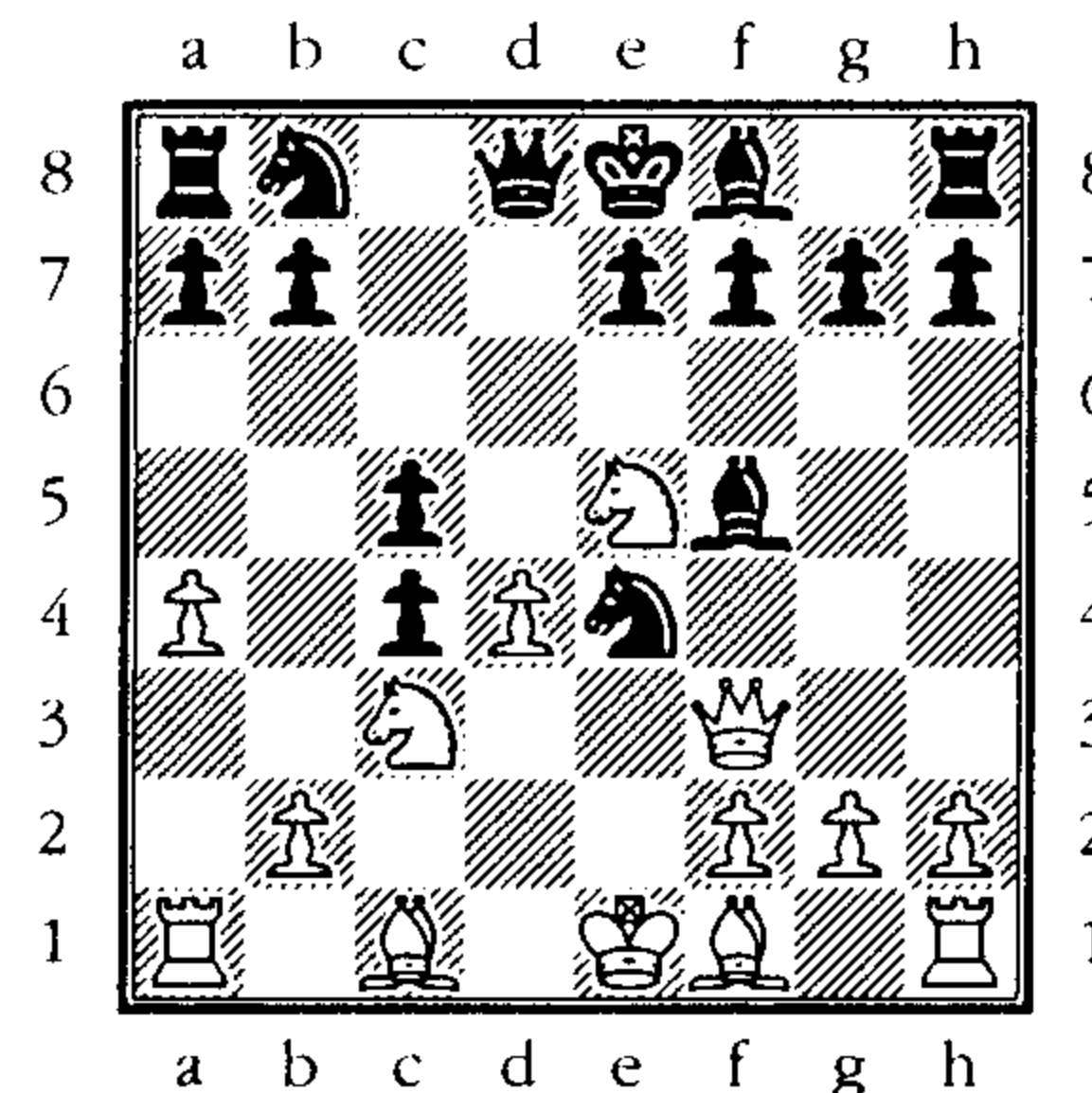
1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Qf3 Qf6 4 Qc3 dxc4 5 a4 Qf5 6 Qe5 $\text{c5!?$



My gut reaction is that Black should continue with his development before attempting to strike at the white centre. But things are far from clear—in the main line of theory Black would continue with 6...e6.

7 e4 Qxe4 8 Wf3

In the game Z.Lehmann-P.Varga, Budapest 1997, White went for the immediate 'hack' 8 Qxf7 Qxf7 9 Wf3 e6 10 g4 and eventually won. However I think Black was not without resource as we shall soon find out...

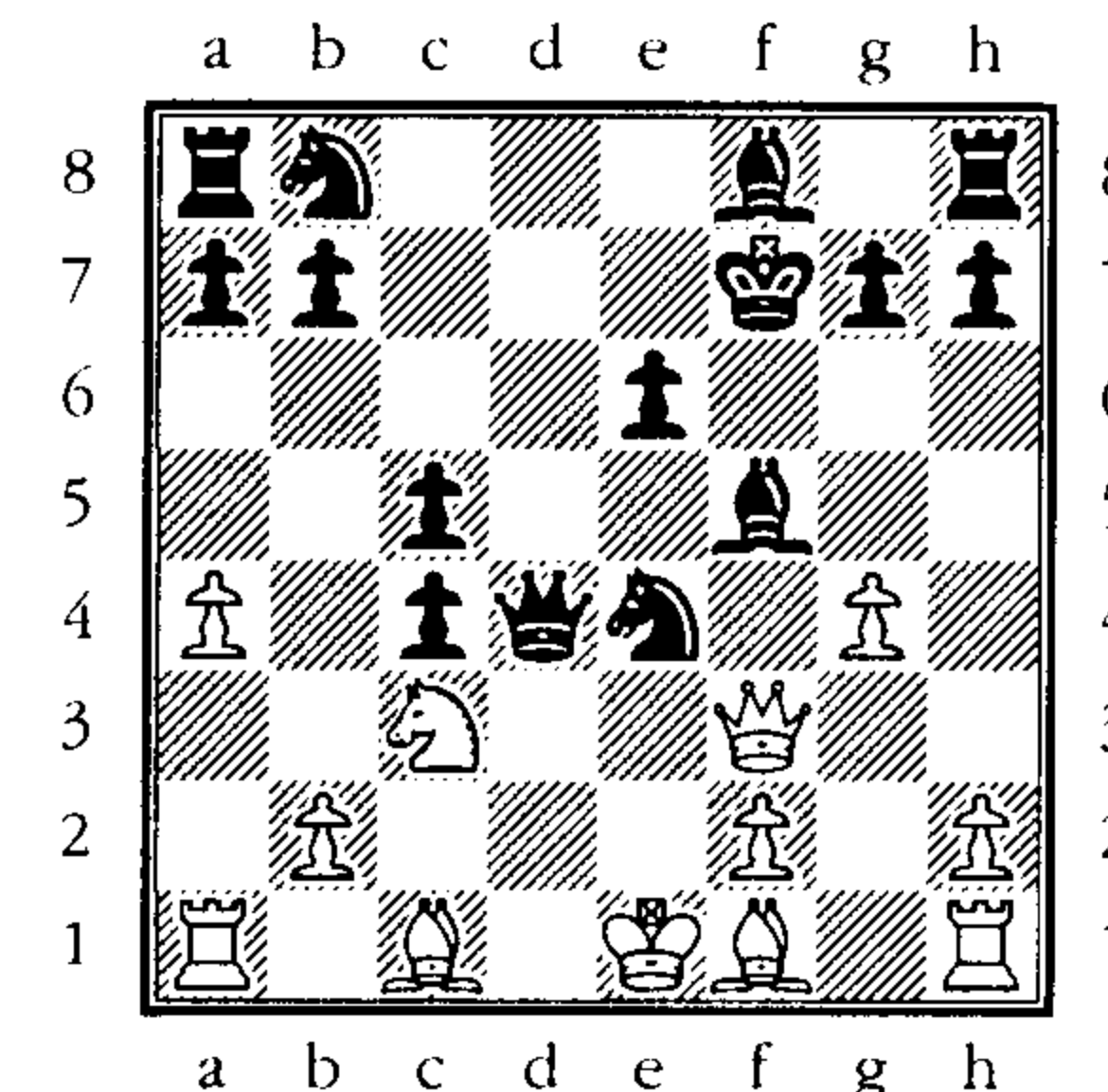


8...cxd4?

Too greedy. It is tempting to overlook the fact that this move is wrong and just look at the 'brilliant' way in which White concluded the game—however, in my opinion, it is imperative to 'search for the truth' so that you aren't caught out when faced with a stronger alternative. After 8...e6!? 9 Qxf7 Qxf7 10 g4 (10 Qxe4 Qc6 11 Qg5+ Qe8 12 Qxc4 [12... $\text{Wc8!?$] 12... Qxd4 13 Wxb7 Qc2+ 14 Qe2 with an un-

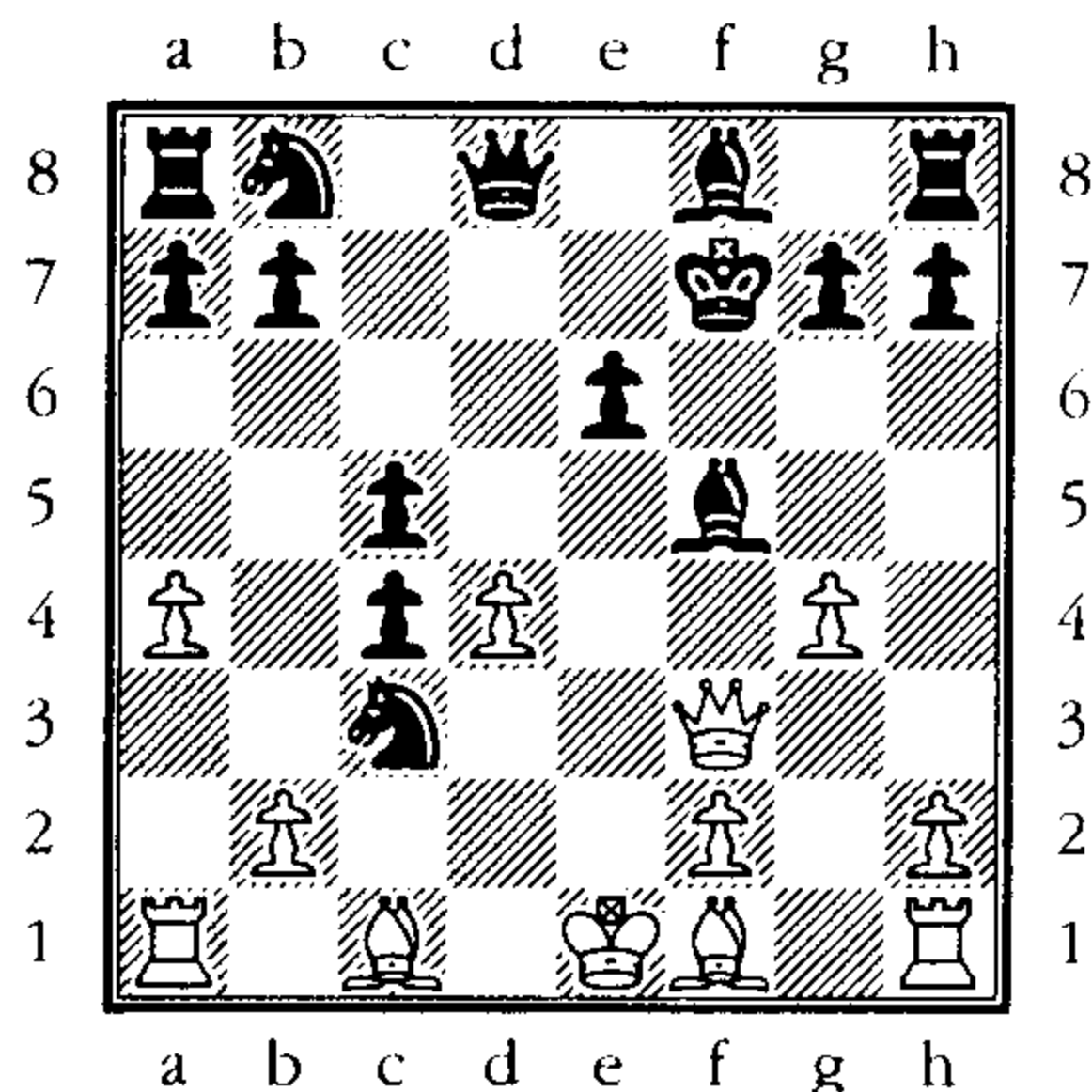
clear position) we have transposed back into the Lehmann-Varga game, so let us look at the possibilities:

a) 10... Wxd4



11 gxf5 exf5 (If 11... Qxc3 12 fxe6+ Qxe6 13 bxc3 We5+ 14 Qd1! Black's king will be caught in the open as White's light-squared bishop will develop devastatingly with check. Black would like to play 14... Wd5+ but after 15 Wxd5+ Qxd5 16 Qg2+ and 17 Qxb7 he will lose a rook on a8) 12 Wxf5+ Qf6 13 Qb5 (13 $\text{Wc8!?$ Wd7 14 Qxc4+ Qe7 15 Wxc5+ Qd8 and Black has weathered the storm) 13... Wd7 (13... g6 14 Qxd4 gxf5 15 Qxc4+ Qe8 16 Qxf5 Qc6 17 Ra3! White has the initiative due to the bishop pair and well-posted knight on f5 in an open position) 14 We5 Qe7 15 Qxc4+ Qf8 16 Qc7 Qc6 (16... Qd6 17 Qe6+ Qe7 18 We3 leaves Black with serious problems) 17 We6 Wxe6+ (17... Wxc7?? 18 Wf7 mate) 18 Qxe6+ Qe8 and White has the pleasant choice between 19 Qc7+ or 19 Qxg7+ both of which will lead to an edge.

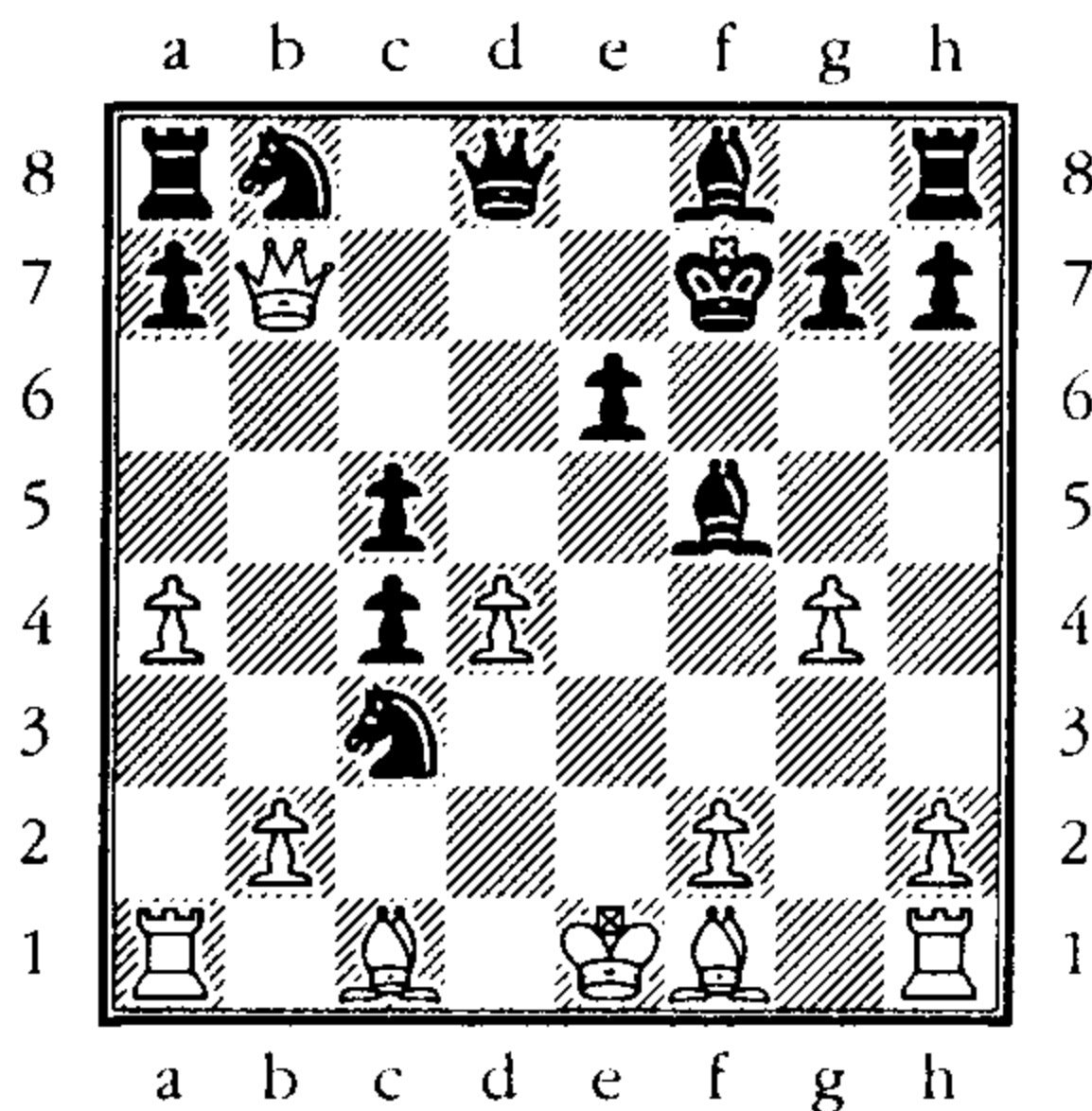
b) 10...♘xc3



And now:

b1) 11 ♙xc4 ♘d5 12 gxf5 cxd4 13 fxe6+ ♔xe6 14 ♚e4+ ♔d7 (14...♔d6 15 ♙xd5 ♚a5+ 16 b4! ♚xb4+ 17 ♙d2 ♚b2 18 ♖c1 and Black is busted) 15 ♙xd5 ♘c6 16 ♙xc6+ bxc6 17 ♚xd4+ ♔c7 18 ♙f4+ ♔b7 19 ♖d1 ♚xd4 20 ♖xd4 and Black has almost achieved equality although, with White's rook able to penetrate the seventh rank, he has slightly the superior position.

b2) 11 ♚xb7+



Black can now choose between the natural:

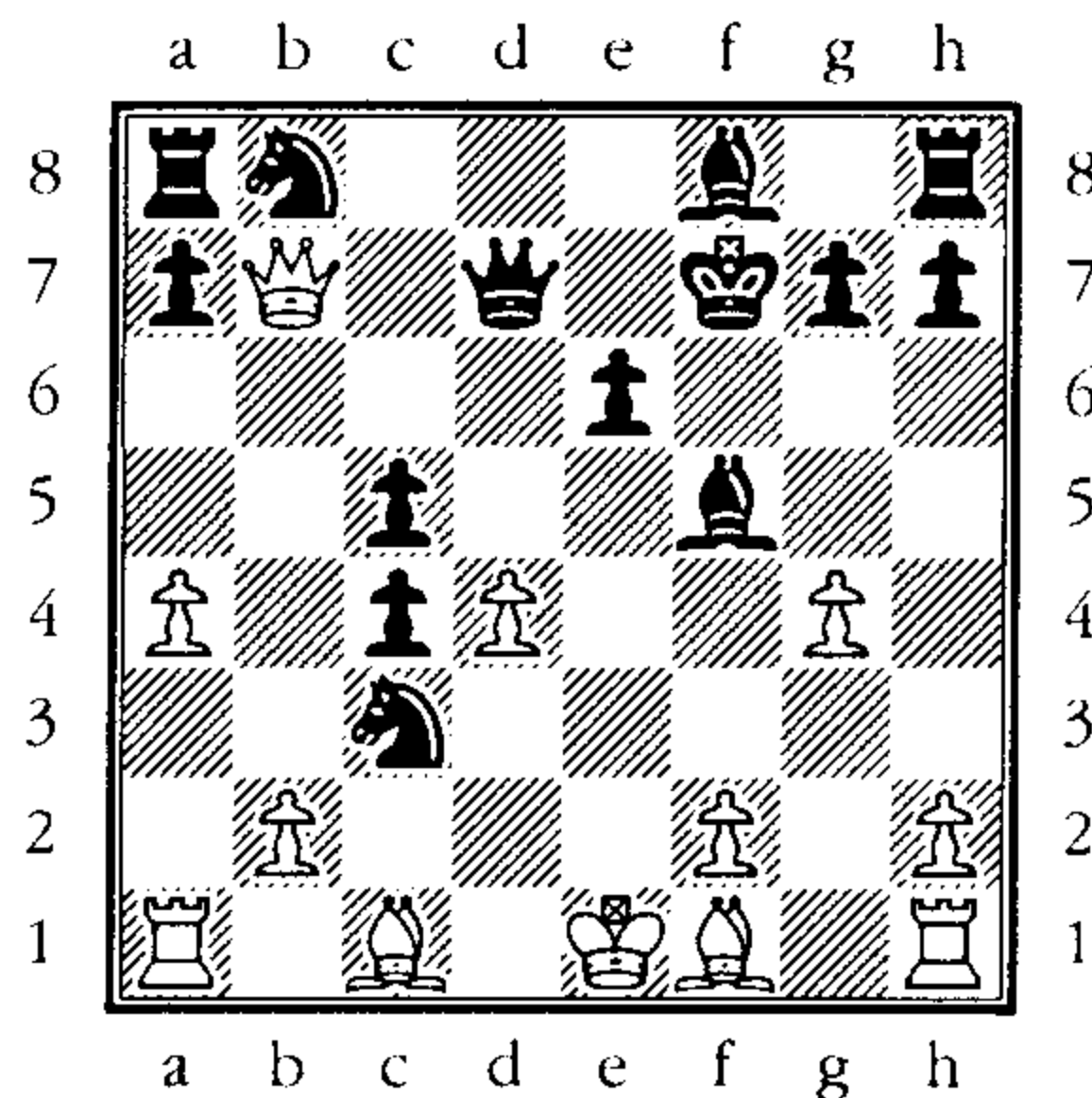
b21) 11...♙e7 12 bxc3 ♚a5 13 ♚f3 cxd4 14 gxf5

with the further possibilities of:

b211) 14...♚e5+ 15 ♔d1! ♚xf5 16 ♚xa8 ♚xf2 (16...♖d8 17 ♙e2 and Black still has to justify his material investment) 17 ♚g2! and White's extra rook will take its toll.

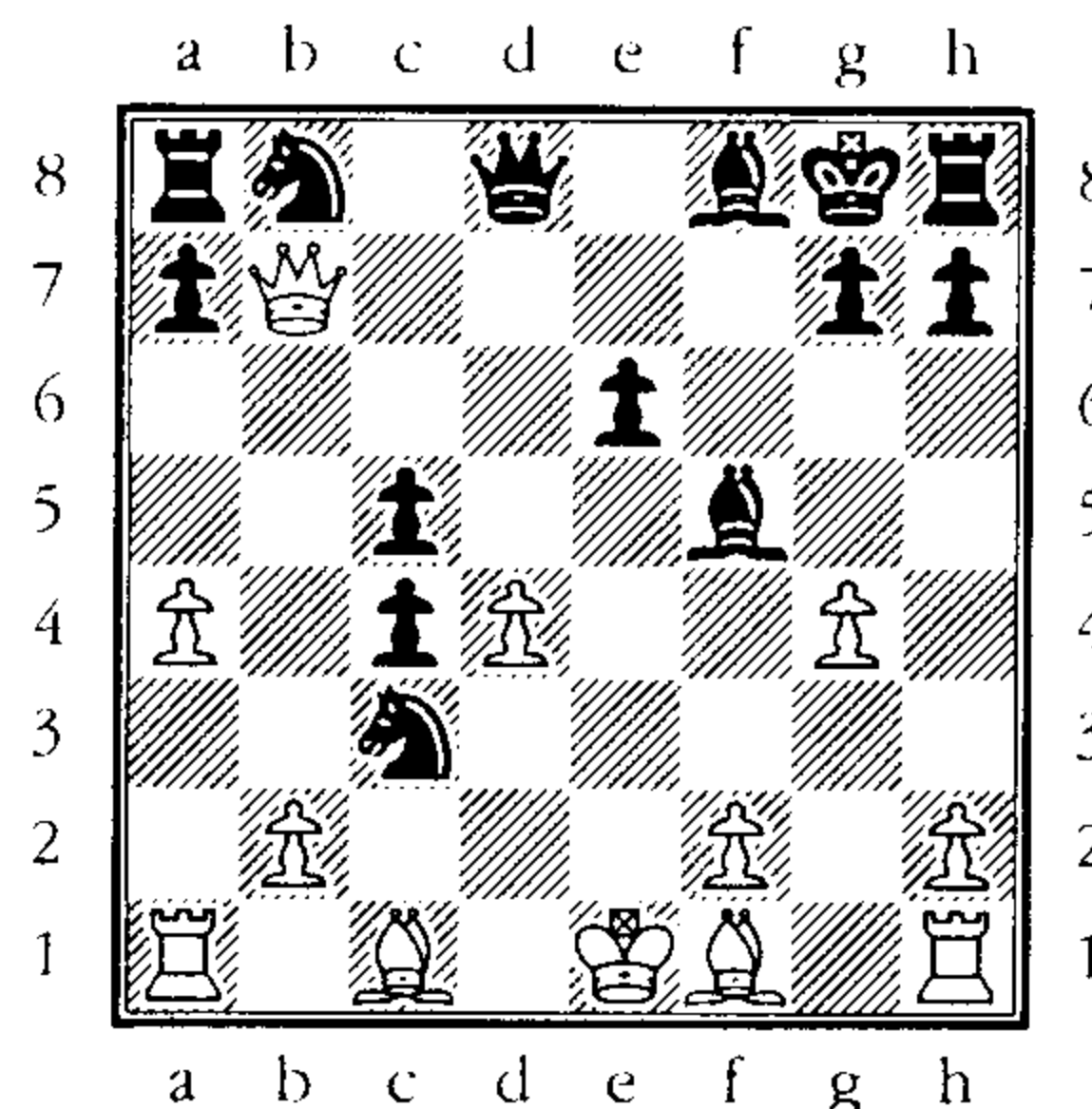
b212) 14...♚xc3+ 15 ♚xc3 dxc3 16 ♙xc4 ♔f6 17 ♙xe6 ♘c6 18 ♖g1 and the position remains in the balance.

b22) 11...♚d7



12 ♚xa8 ♙e4! 13 ♚xb8 ♙xh1 (13...♘d5!? 14 ♖g1 cxd4 and Black has full compensation for the exchange) 14 ♚f4+ (14 bxc3 cxd4 15 ♚f4+ ♔g8 16 ♙xc4 dxc3 17 ♙e3 ♙d5 Black has 'gone solid' and will enjoy the advantage) 14...♔g8 15 bxc3 transposing to the previous note.

b23) 11...♔g8



Now White must choose carefully between:

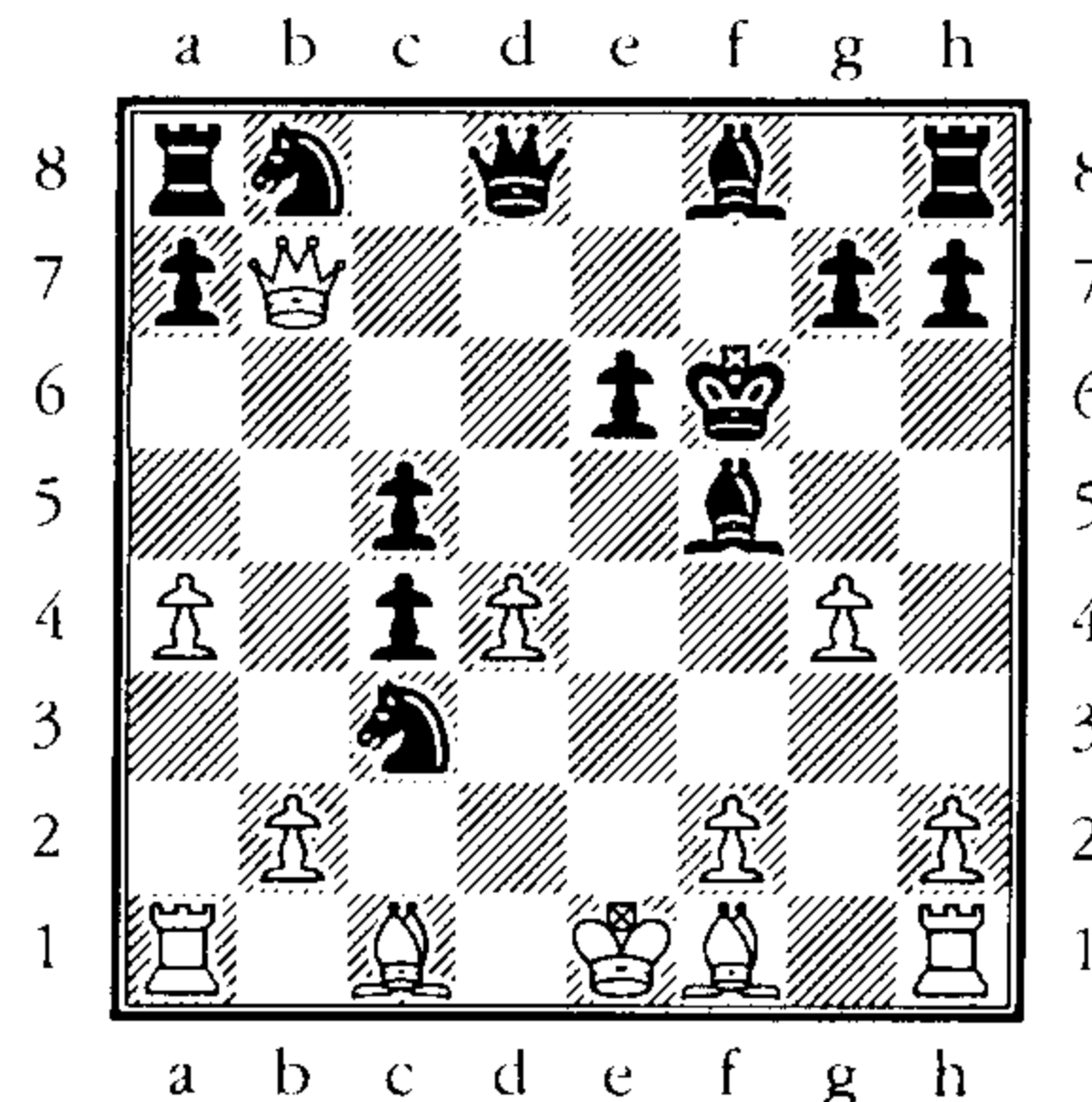
b231) 12 ♚xa8 ♙e4! 13 ♙xc4! ♙d5 (13...♙e7!? 14 ♙xe6+ ♔f8 15 ♚xa7 ♘c6 16 ♚d7 ♙xh1 17 bxc3 cxd4! and White is in trouble.

and

b232) 12 gxf5 12...♚d5 (12...♚xd4 13 ♙e3 ♚e4 14 ♚xe4 ♘xe4 15 ♙xc4 gives Black a headache) 13 ♙g2! and White will maintain an advantage.

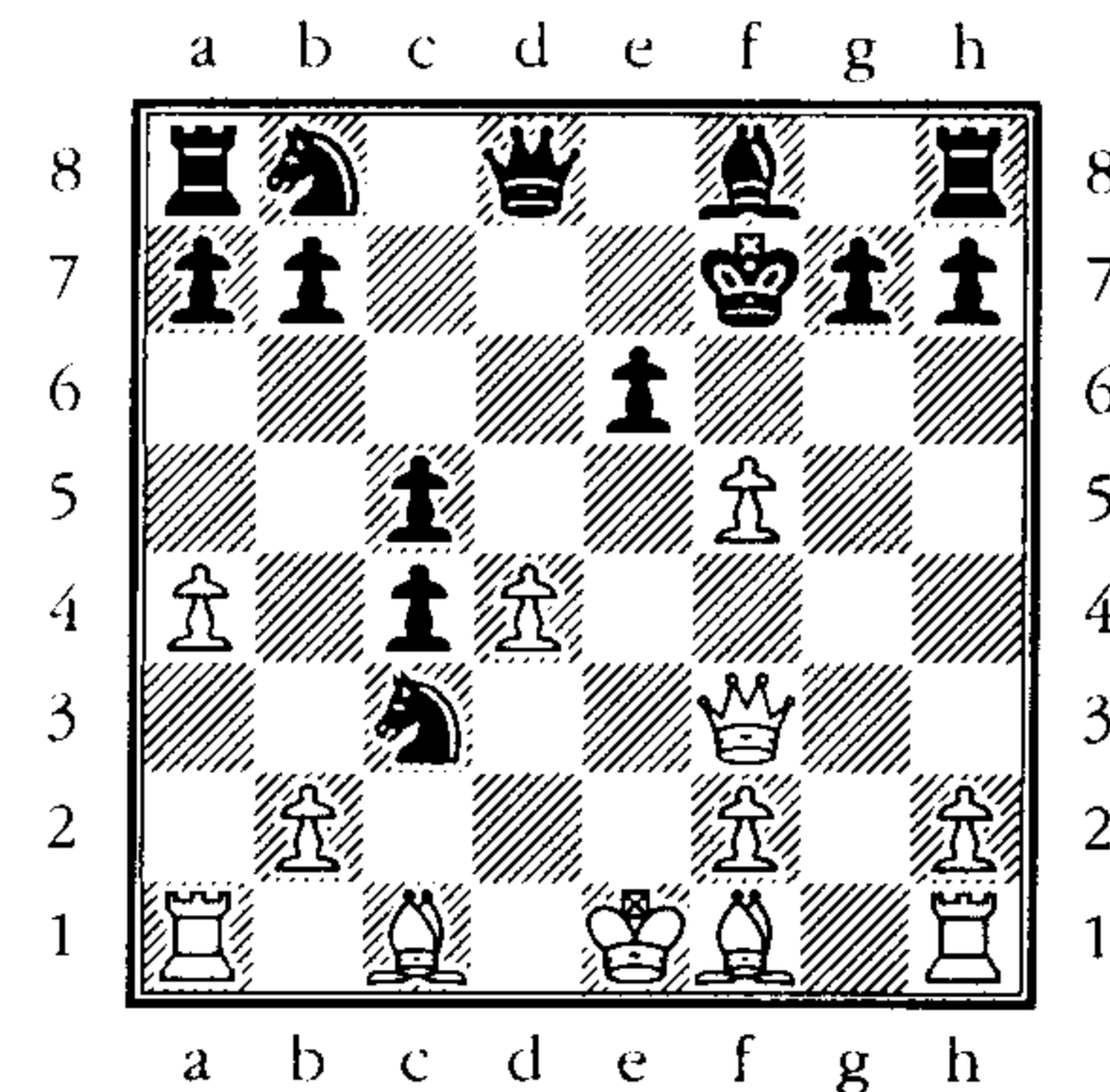
The most enterprising try for Black, though, is:

b24) 11...♔f6!



12 bxc3 ♚a5! (after 12...♚d5 13 ♙g2! ♚xb7 14 ♙xb7 ♙xg4 15 ♙xa8 cxd4 16 ♖g1 ♙f5 17 cxd4 White's extra material gives him the advantage but there is still a lot of work to do to secure the full point) 13 ♙d2 cxd4 14 cxd4 (14 ♚xa8 ♚e5+!) 14...c3 15 ♙f4 c2+ 16 ♙d2 ♚d5 17 ♚xd5 (17 ♙g2 ♚xd4! and White has serious problems) 17...exd5 18 gxf5 ♘c6 19 ♙e3 ♙b4+ 20 ♔e2 ♙c3 21 ♖c1 ♘b4 and it is Black's turn to have the fun.

b3) 11 gxf5! (the Lehmann-Varga continuation)



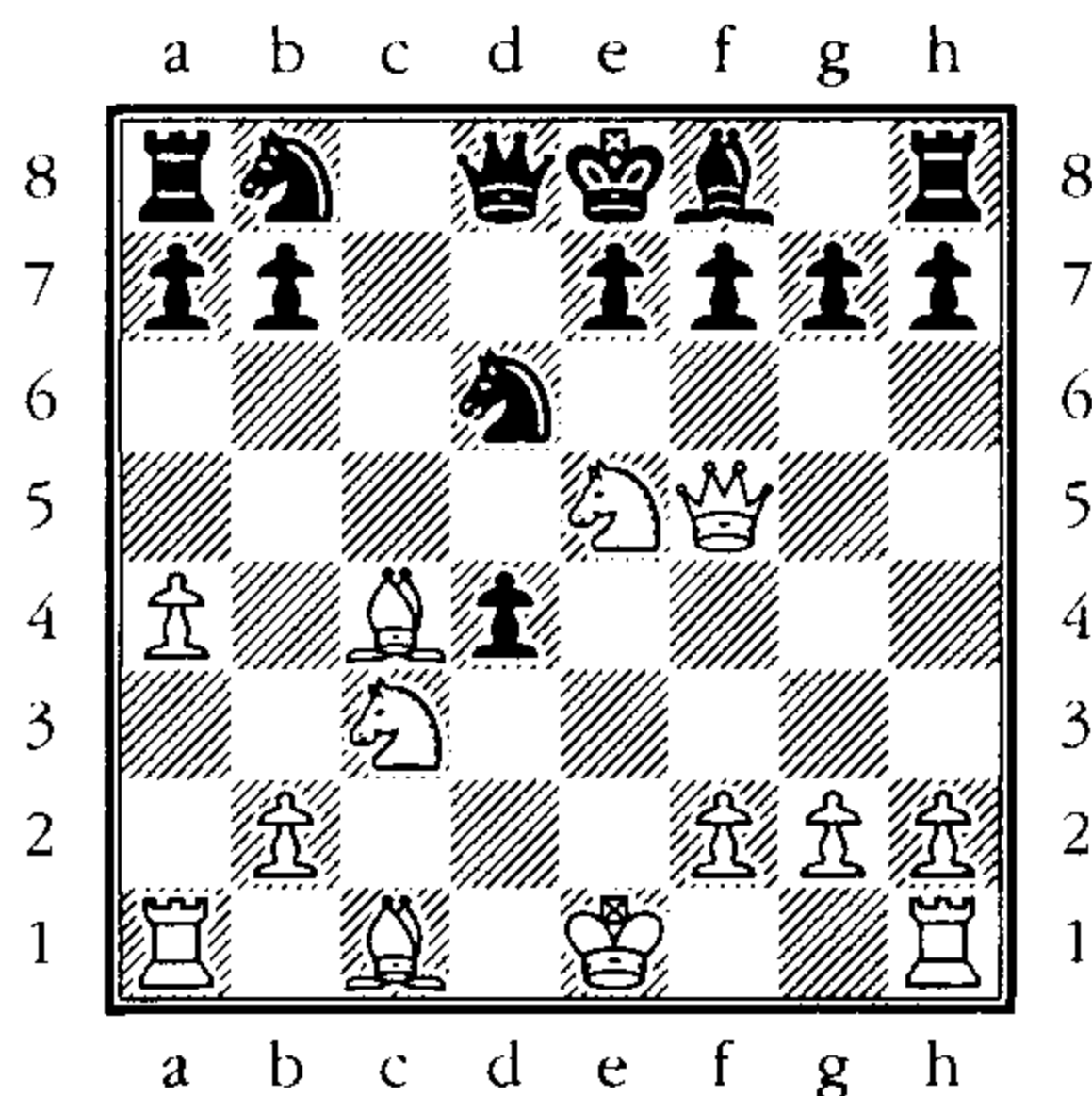
11...♚d5 12 fxe6+ ♔e8 13 ♚f7+ ♔d8 14 bxc3 and now, instead of 14...♙e7, 14...♚e4+ may well be critical, e.g.

b31) 15 ♙e3 cxd4 16 e7+ ♙xe7 17 ♚xg7 ♖e8! (17...dxe3?! 18 ♖d1+ ♔c7 19 ♙g2! exf2+ 20 ♔f1 and Black is worse) 18 ♚xd4+ ♚xd4 19 cxd4 ♙g5 with approximate equality.

b32) 15 ♔d1! ♚xh1 16 ♙g5+ ♔c8 17 ♚e8+ ♔c7 18 ♔d2! ♚f3 (18...b6 19 e7 ♙xe7 20 ♙f4+! and White has a mating attack) 19 ♙e2 ♚d5 (19...♚f5 20 ♚d8+ ♔c6 21

♖c8+ ♕d5 22 f4! and Black is unlikely to survive) 20 ♖f4+ ♖d6 21 ♖e7+ and White has the upper hand.

9 ♖xf5 ♘d6 10 ♖xc4!!



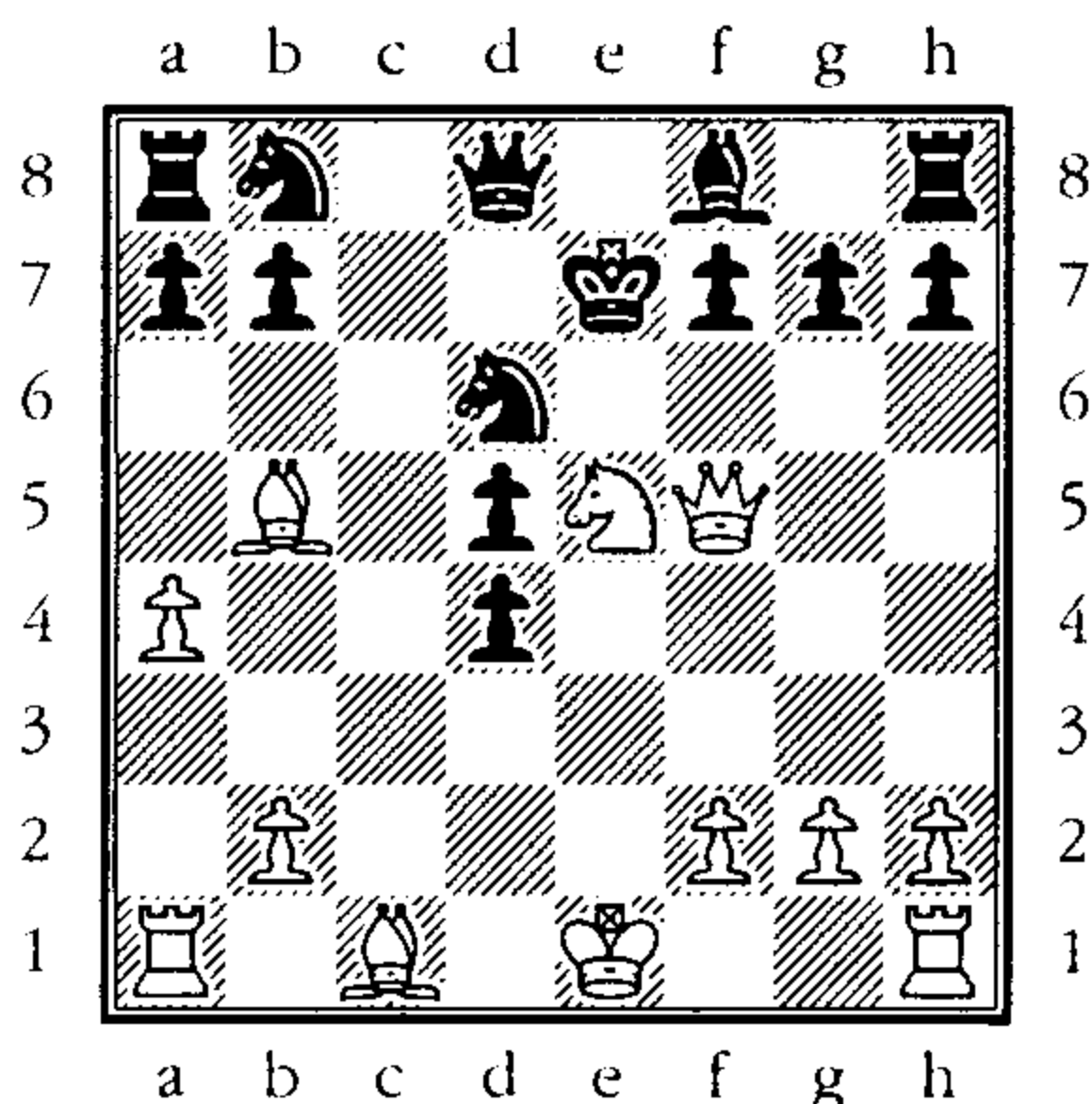
10...e6

Obviously 10...♘f5?? allows 11 ♖xf7 mate.

11 ♖b5+! ♕e7

11...♘c6 12 ♖f3 leaves White with enormous pressure, e.g. 12...♖c7 (12...dxc3 13 ♘xc6 will transpose to the text) 13 ♘xc6 dxc3 14 ♘d4+ ♘xb5 15 ♘xb5 and White is a piece ahead.

12 ♘d5+! exd5



13 ♘g6+! fxg6

13...hxg6 14 ♖e5 mate.

14 ♖g5 mate

To conclude: we haven't found a definite improvement for Black over the Lehmann-Varga game, although there may still be scope for new ideas. I would suspect that most of White's play had been prepared (excellently) prior to the game.

Often in weekend tournaments we have a situation where, prior to the commencement of play, players know who they are going to play and with which colour. This is possible because the players have 'calculated' the pairings or these have been made and displayed some time in advance of the round's starting time. The temptation then is for the weaker player to 'prepare' for their opponent—sometimes by looking at material on the bookstall. However the problem with this is that they only pick up a 'superficial' understanding. The following example shows what can happen when things don't go according to plan—as a consequence of one player's far deeper knowledge and experience in the chosen line.

White: Ian White
Black: Chris Beaumont
Hanham Open 1997
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 g6

One of Chris Beaumont's specialities.

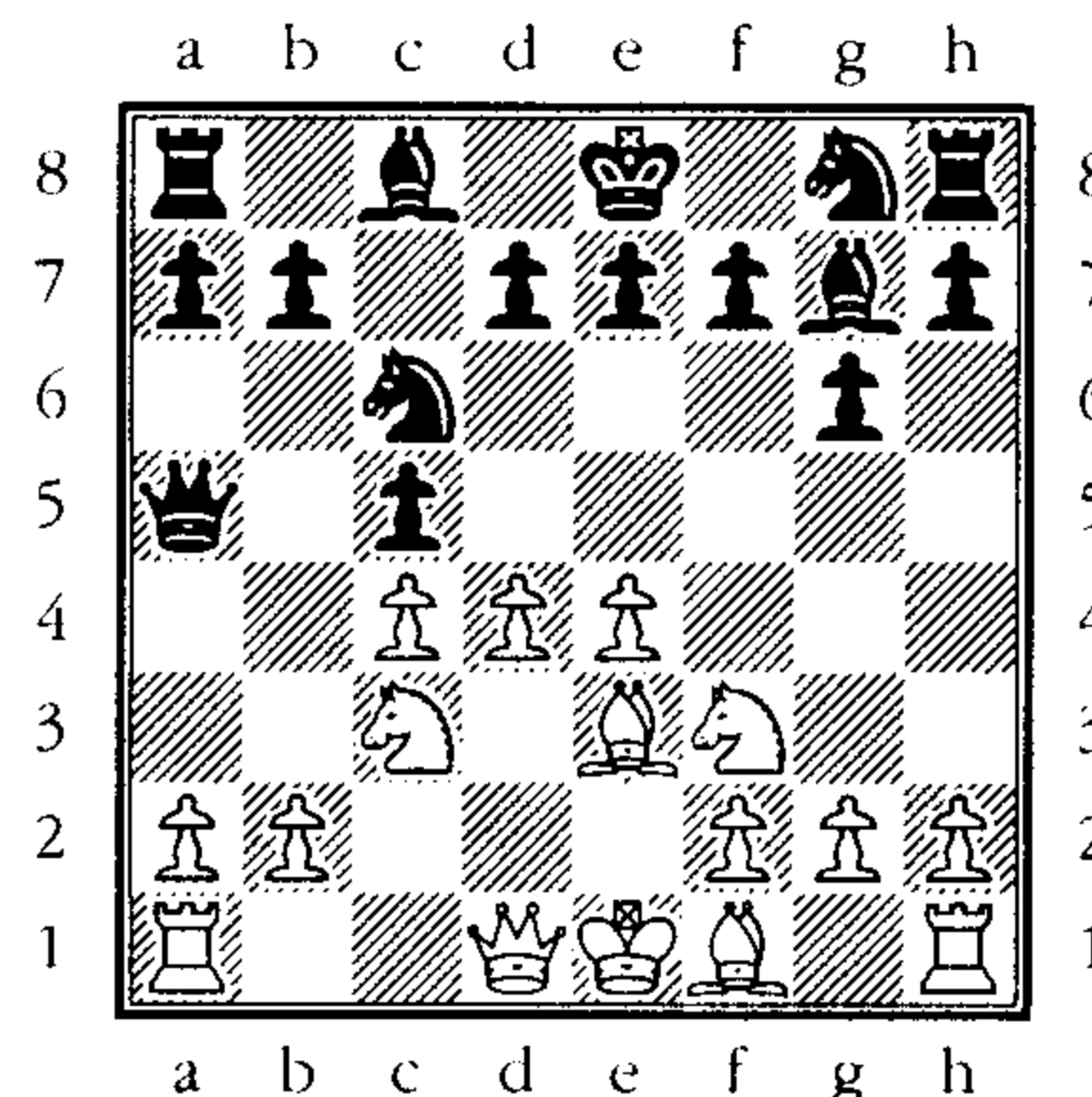
3 c4

Avoiding the challenges of the Sicilian Accelerated Dragon with 3 d4.

3...♖g7 4 d4

Aiming for a Maroczy Bind type position should Black immediately capture on d4 with 4...cxd4.

4...♖a5+ 5 ♘c3 ♘c6 6 ♖e3?



White plays a 'natural' and 'normal'-looking developing move but Black's understanding of this variation soon casts doubt on its viability.

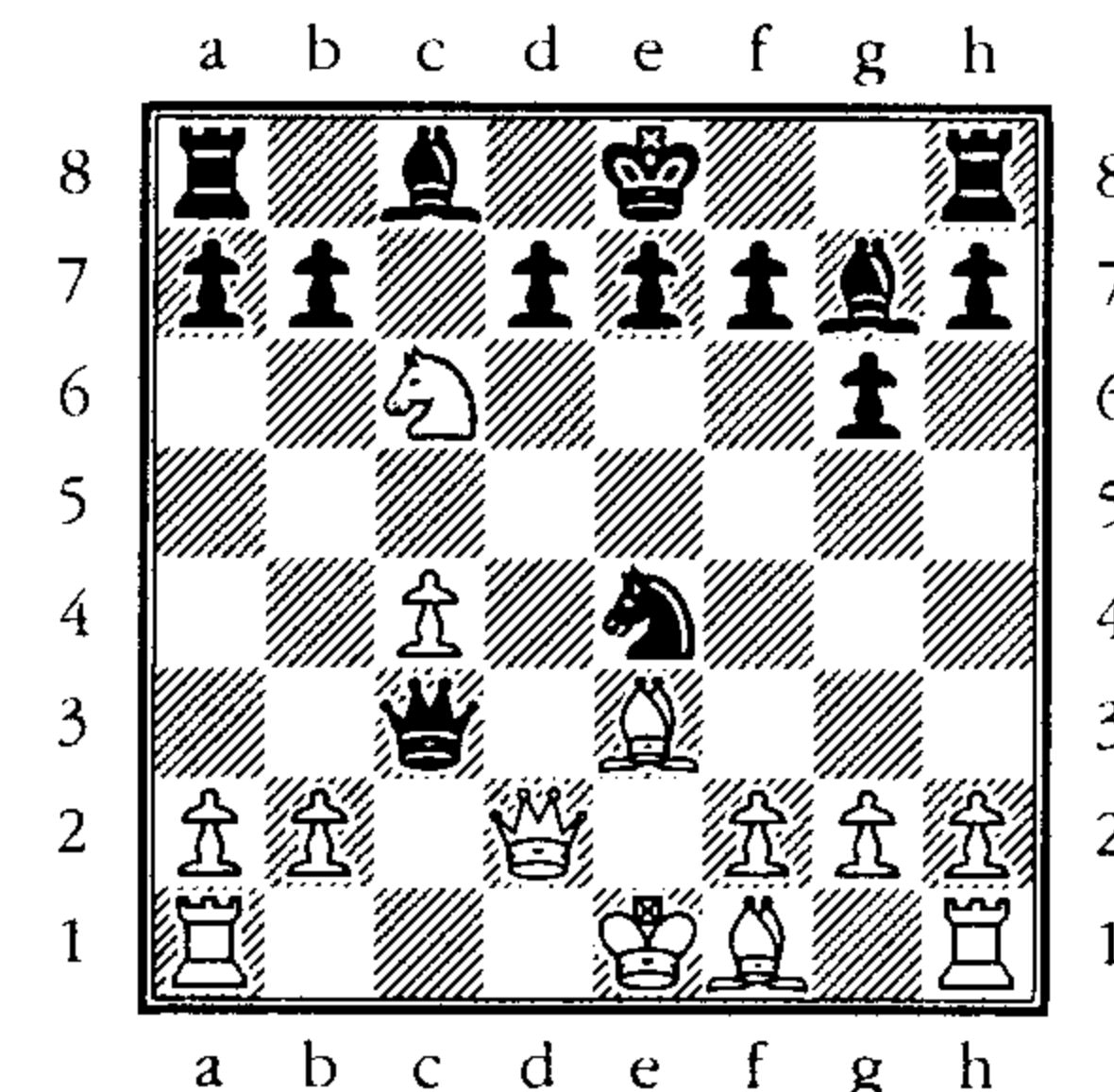
6...♘f6

Now moves like ...♘f6xe4 and ...♘f6-g4 are looming but Black has a more devious plan in mind.

7 ♖d2 cxd4 8 ♘xd4 ♘xe4! 9 ♘xc6

For a moment it looks as if it is White that has 'tricked' Black but in fact all this has been played before! Black's next move has good shock value as well. Had White played 9 ♘xe4 ♖xd2+ 10 ♕xd2 ♘xd4 then Black would have been a sound pawn ahead.

9...♖xc3!!

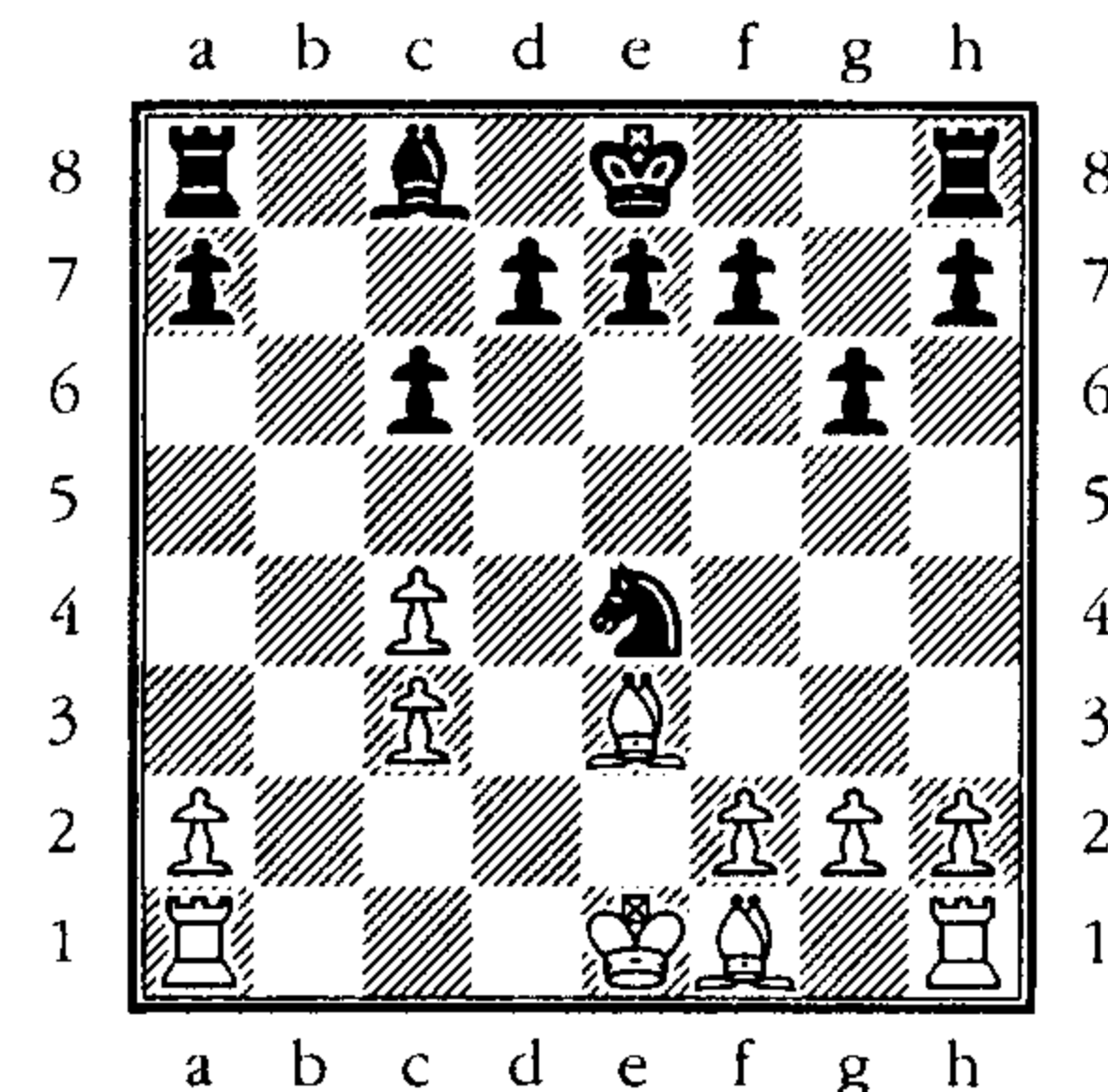


10 ♖xc3

10 bxc3 ♘xd2 was played in M.Tratar-V.Shushpanov, Czech Open 1998, which Black won. An interesting continuation of 10...♘xd2 could have been 11 ♘xa7 ♖xc3 12 ♘b5 ♖xa1 13 ♘c7+ ♕f8 14 ♖h6+ ♖g7 15 ♖xg7+ ♕xg7 16 ♘xa8 ♘e4. Black has still work to do but his extra pawn gives him the advantage.

10...♖xc3+ 11 bxc3 bxc6

11...dxc6! is also quite playable.

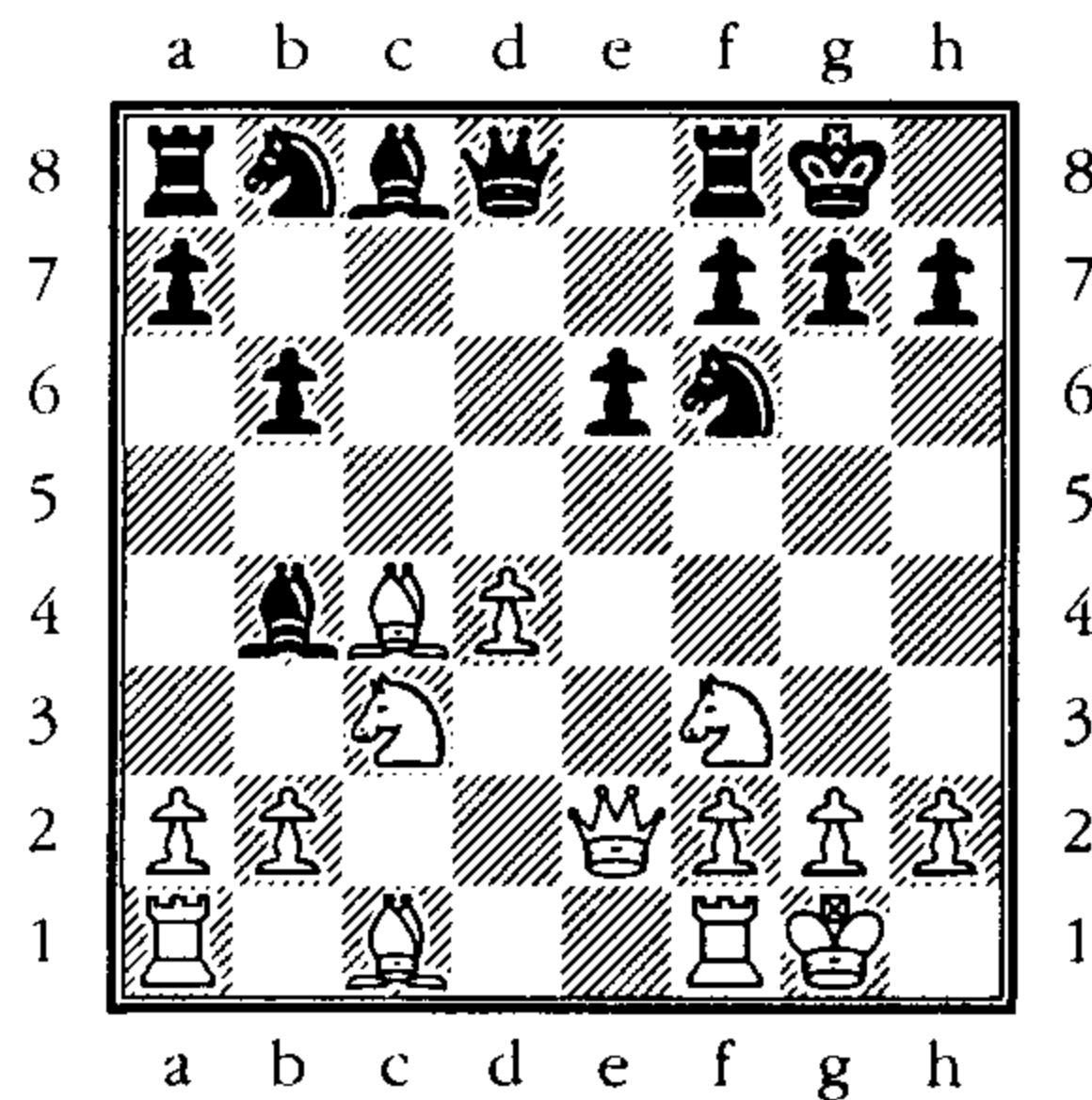


It is not necessary to show the rest of the game, only to conclude that after eleven moves Black is a pawn ahead and in no danger. Black has therefore 'won' the opening and must now 'work' to convert his advantage. As far as depth of opening preparation goes, Kasparov has for many years struck fear into the heart of us mere mortals as the following game shows.

White: Evgeny Vladimirov
 Black: Garry Kasparov
 Europe-Asia Rapid Match,
 Batumi 2001
 Nimzo-Indian Defence

Our 'rabbit' here is a mere 2600+ player!

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♙d3 d5 6 ♘f3 c5 7 0-0 cxd4 8 exd4 dxc4 9 ♙xc4 b6 10 ♖e2



A typical isolated queen's pawn position. In return for the weakness in his pawn structure White has open lines and diagonals which promote active piece play and attacking possibilities against the black king. However, more usual is 10 ♙g5 to complete White's minor

piece development and connecting his rooks before committing to the plan involving ♖d1-e2.

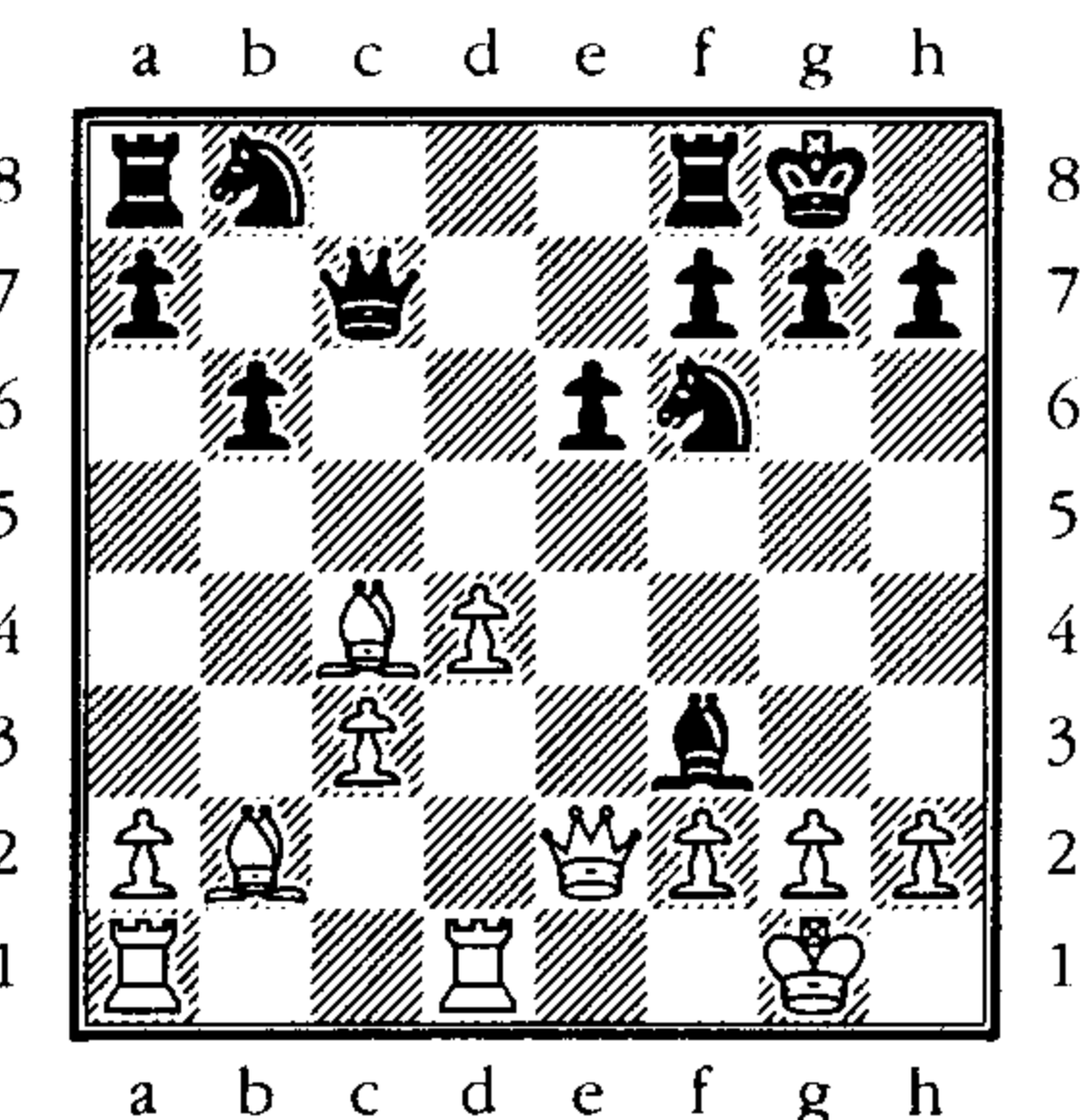
10...♙b7 11 ♖d1

11 ♙g5 or even 11 ♙f4 are frequently played.

11...♙xc3 12 bxc3 ♖c7 13 ♙b2?

It would be better if White offered the pawn sacrifice 13 ♙d3!? when after 13...♖xc3 (13...♘bd7! is the safer approach) 14 ♙b2 ♖a5 15 d5! ♙xd5 16 ♙xf6 gxf6 17 ♖e3 ♘g7 18 ♘e5 ♖g8 19 ♘g4 the position is far from clear, Z.Dub-L.Vadasz, Budapest 2000. The 'refutation' of White's last move, which completed his development, is staggering.

13...♙xf3!!

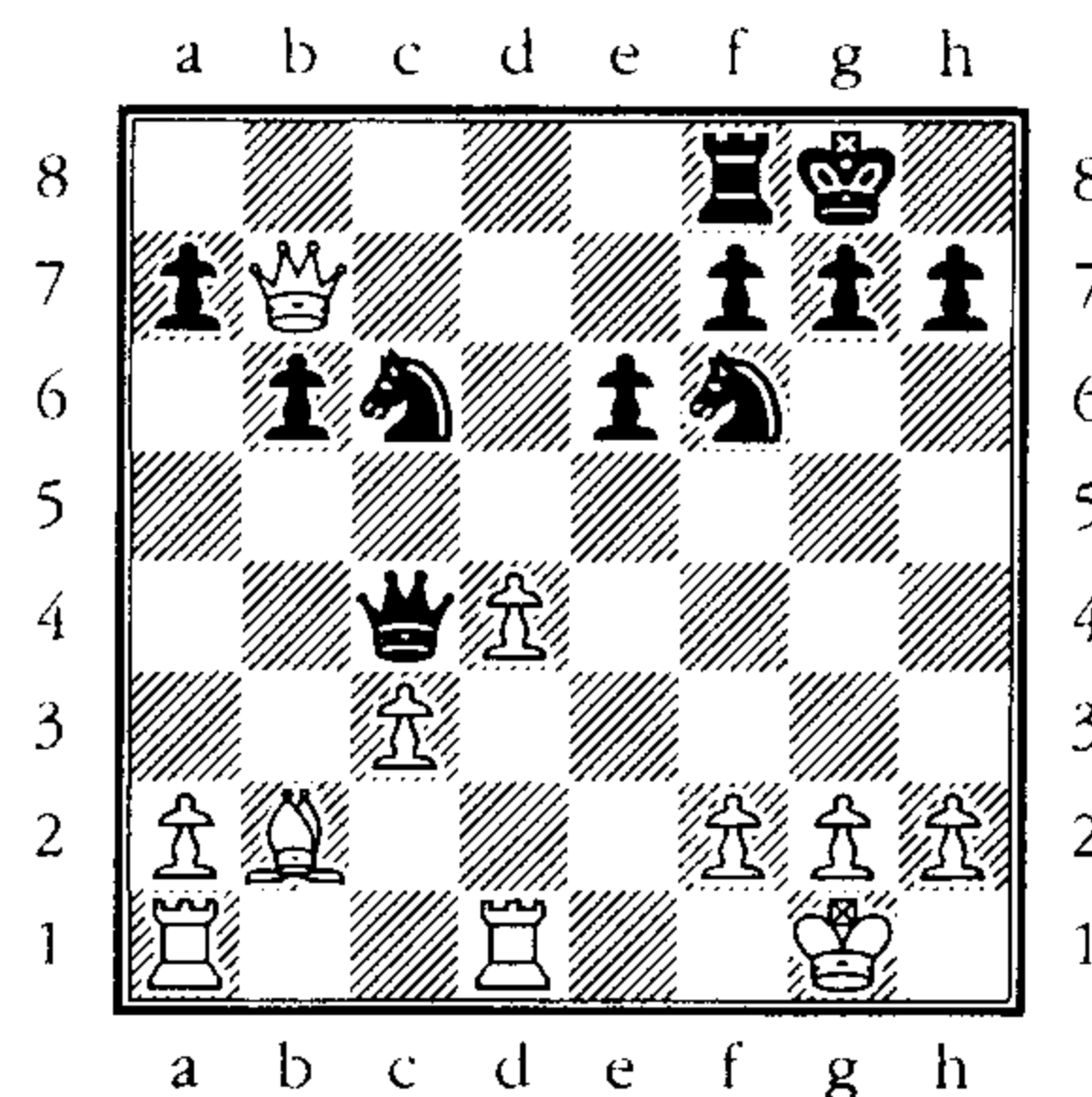


Kasparov's extraordinarily deep opening knowledge and preparation strikes again! At first sight this move appears to concede the bishop pair to no purpose but things are not always as they first seem! It is Kasparov's ability to sort the 'wood from the chaff' in pre-game preparation that has caused many a strong opponent's downfall.

14 ♖xf3

After the alternative recapture 14 gxf3 White has problems, despite having the bishop pair, due to the poor placement of his bishop on b2 and his disrupted pawn structure. Black will then patiently wait to post a knight on f4.

14...♖xc4 15 ♖xa8 ♘c6 16 ♖b7



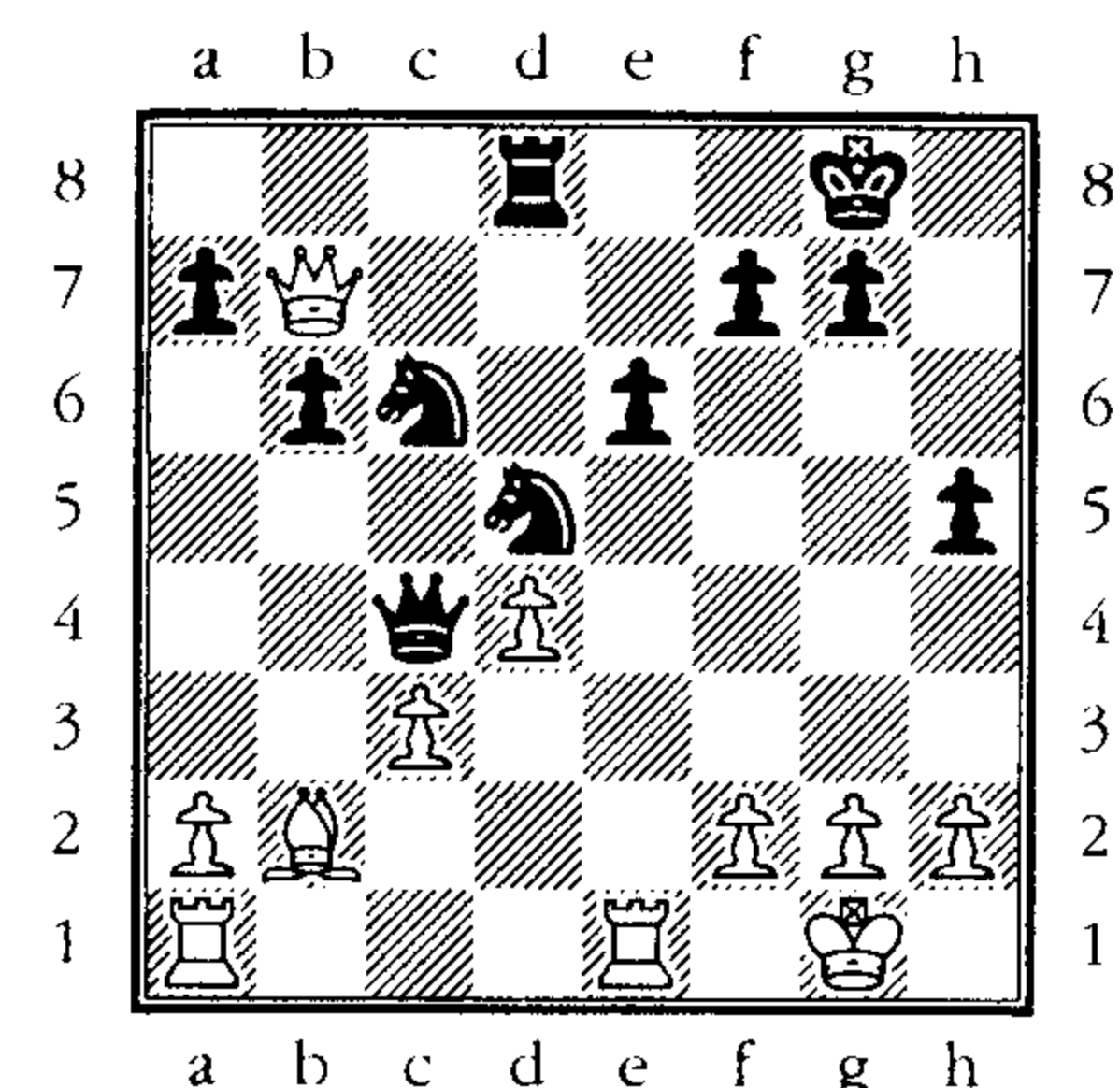
Despite being the exchange up, White has problems. His bishop on b2 is out of play and his queen on b7 is not a happy piece—also note White's lack of any control and influence on the light squares.

16...♘d5 17 ♖e1 ♖b8 18 ♖d7 ♖d8 19 ♖b7

Black has gained a useful tempo to develop his rook from f8 to d8. The fact that he could have 'chickened out', taking the perpetual against the white queen, shows that White's opening has been far from successful. Moreover Black has a sinister agenda in mind...

19...h5!

A useful waiting move which prevents any future nonsense on the back rank.



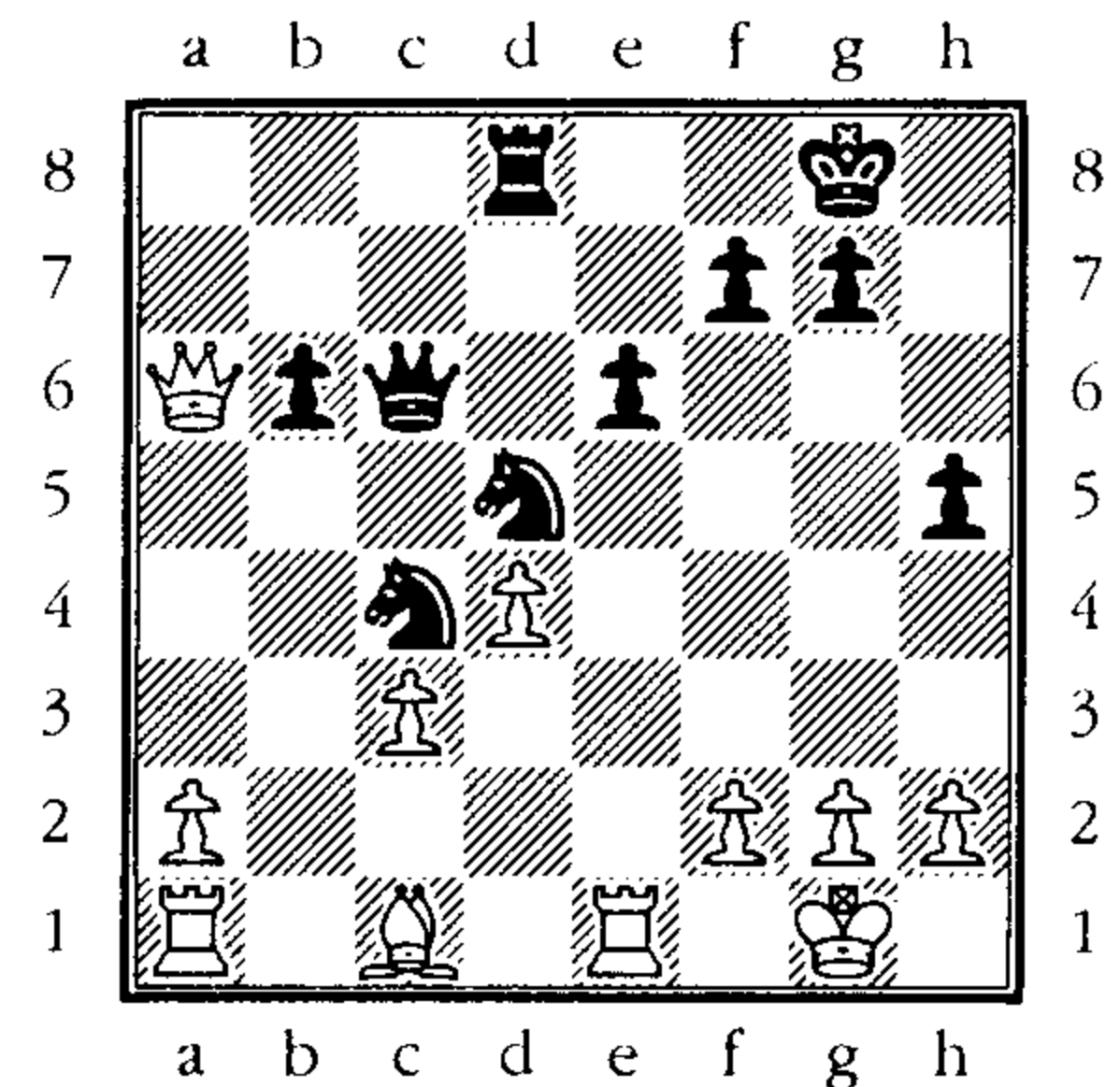
20 ♙c1

White has hopes of redeveloping his bishop but even the pawn now hanging on c3 cannot tempt Black away from his grand design.

20...♘a5! 21 ♖xa7 ♖c6 22 ♖a6

The white queen wants to make a run for it but unfortunately...

22...♘c4!



Once again shutting the door on any plans for escape.

23 ♖b1 ♘c7 0-1

White has had enough. The fact that only one of White's moves (13 ♖b2) deserved a question mark and that he lost in 23 moves shows the strength of Kasparov at his best. I suppose, in retrospect, 13 ♖b2 might deserve a double question mark as it basically loses more or less by force—but I believe it was as much the strength of Black's play as White's weak moves that was relevant. Nowadays opening preparation can be very deep and it is necessary to keep 'up to date' with what is going on. Here is one of my own failures.

White: Chris Baker
Black: Paul Kelly
Caerphilly Open 1999
Max Lange Attack

1 e4 ♘c6 2 ♘f3 e5

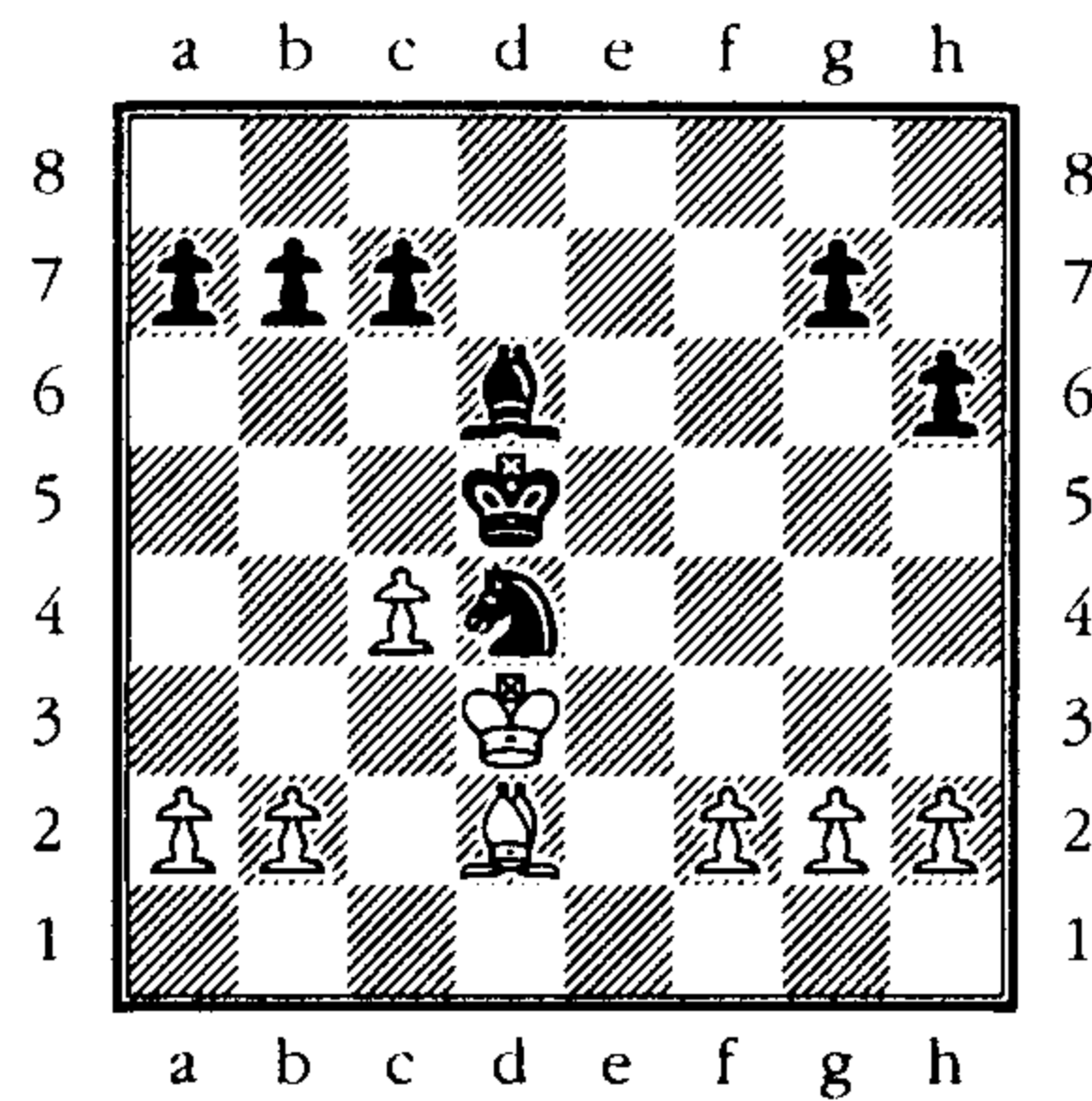
Transposing back to more well-known paths.

3 ♖c4 ♘f6 4 d4!?

The Max Lange Attack in which I have been known to like to 'dabble' now and then.

4...exd4 5 0-0 ♘xe4 6 ♖e1 d5 7 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 8 ♘c3 ♗a5 9 ♘xe4 ♖e6 10 ♘eg5 0-0-0 11 ♘xe6 fxe6 12 ♖xe6 ♖d6 13 ♖g5 ♖de8 14 ♗e1 ♗xe1+ 15 ♖axel ♖xe6 16 ♖xe6 ♘d7 17 ♖e4 ♖e8 18 ♖xe8 ♘xe8 19 ♖d2 h6 20 ♘f1 ♘f7 21 ♘e2 ♘e6 22 ♘d3 ♘d5 23 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 24 c4+

Up to this point 'I had seen it all before'. Unfortunately for me so had my opponent!



24...♗e6!

In a world correspondence tournament, 24...♗e5 had been the move played and, after 25 f4+ ♗f5 26 ♘xd4 ♖xf4 27 ♖xf4 ♘xf4, White, with careful play, went on to win the king and pawn ending.

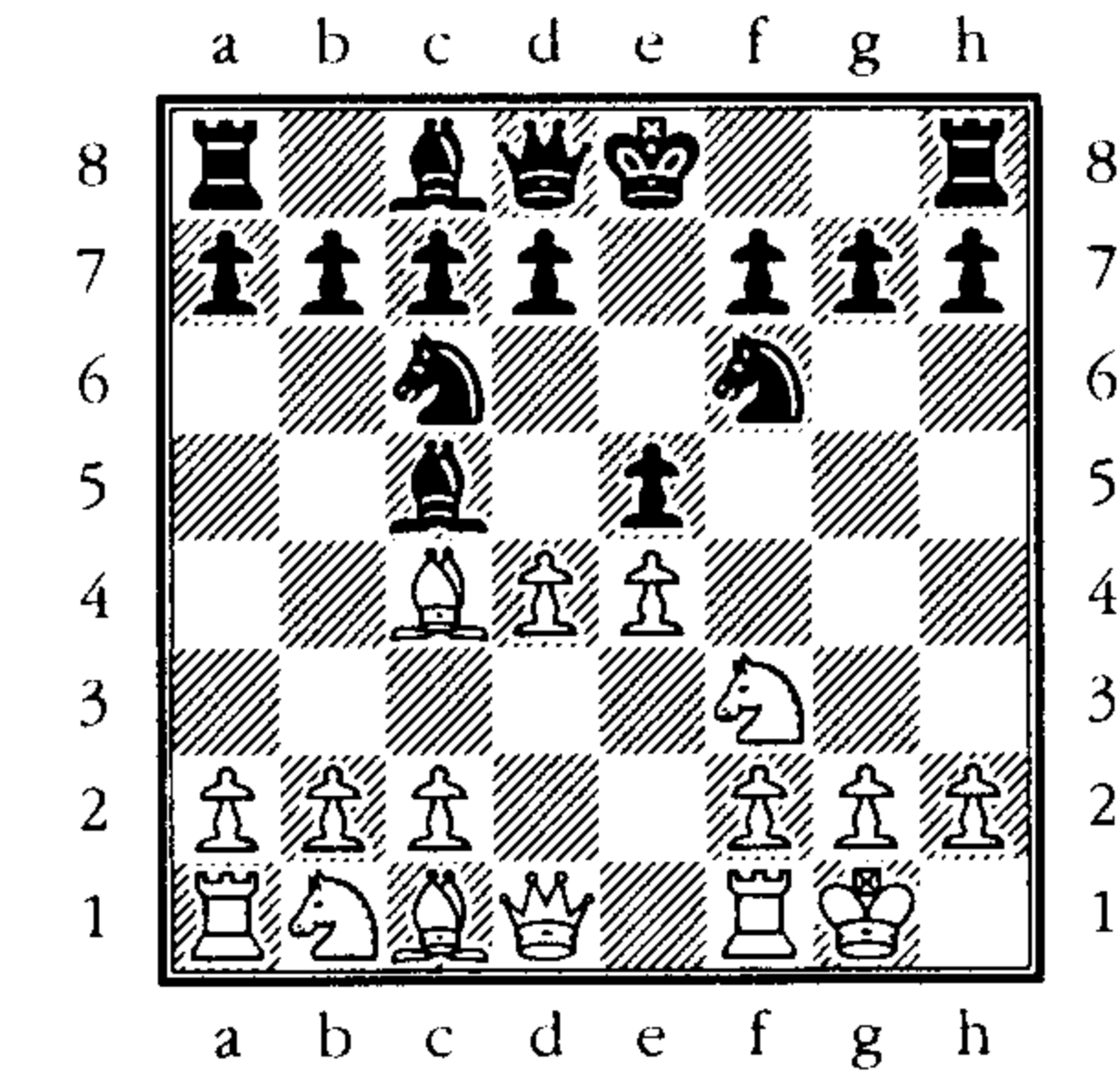
25 ♘xd4 ♖e5+ 26 ♗e4 ♖xb2

And although White may still have an edge thanks to his better bishop, under the 'pressure' of trying to win in the first round of an open against a 'weaker' opponent and having been caught out by his superior opening preparation, I went on to lose. Just to show that even 'good' players can get it wrong here is the opening I had against a strong International Master from the Paignton Open one year.

White: Chris Baker
Black: Gary Lane
Giuoco Piano

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♖c4 ♖c5 4 0-0 ♘f6 5 d4!?

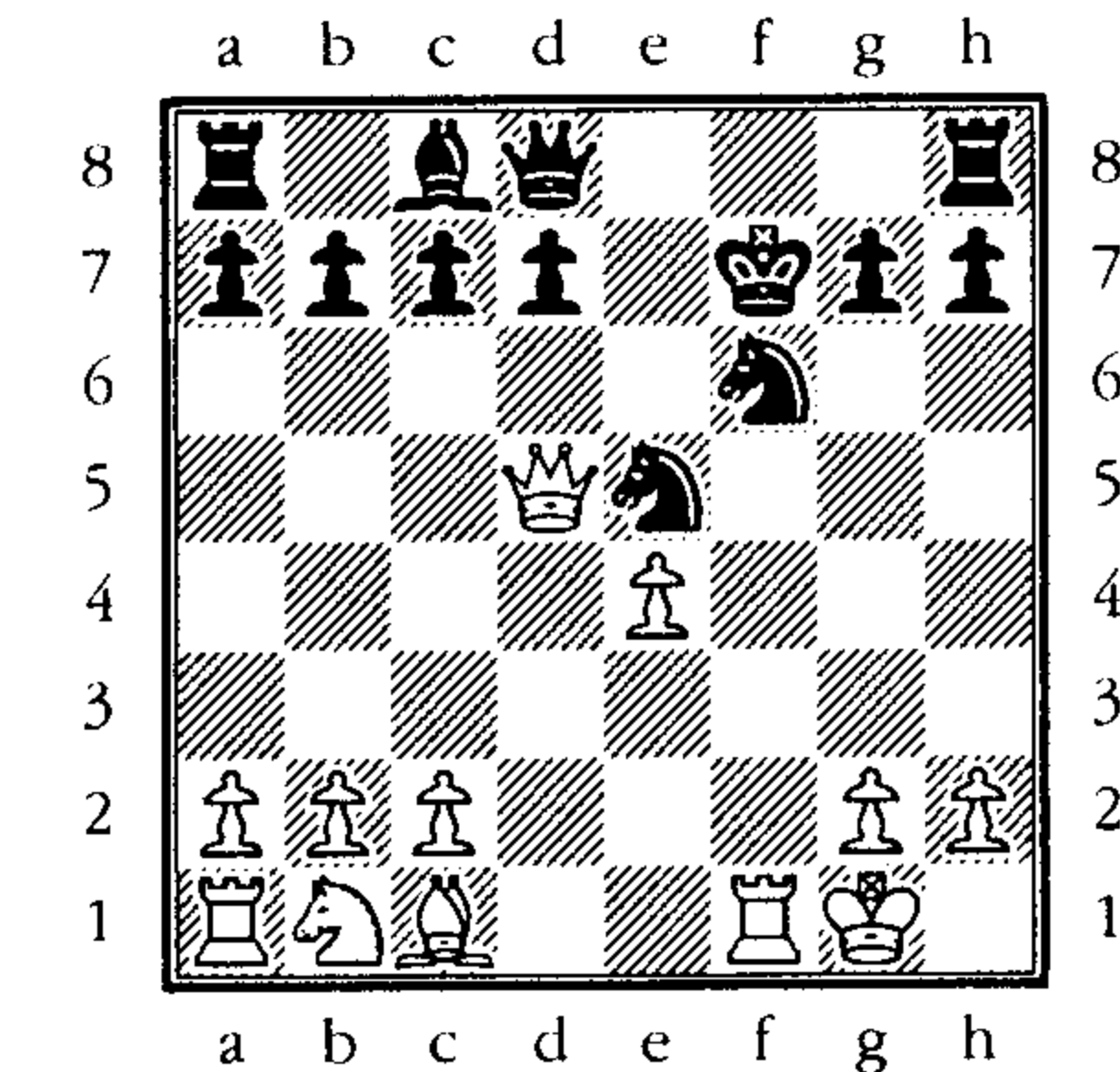
An interesting move that allows Black either to transpose to the Max Lange with 5...exd4 or to grab a pawn with...



5...♖xd4 6 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 7 f4 ♘c6?

Correct is 7...d6 8 c3 ♖g4 9 ♗d2 ♖e6! (9...♘xe4? 10 ♗e3 ♘c2 11 ♗xe4) 10 ♖d3 ♘c6 11 f5 ♖d7 with complex play—in return for the pawn White has the bishop pair and better development. After the text move 7...♘c6 I missed a 'killer blow' and eventually the game was drawn. Afterwards Gary immediately pointed out the winning move as he knew the position well but had 'forgotten' that White could play...

8 ♖xf7+ ♘xf7 9 fxe5 ♘xe5 10 ♗d5+



...when Black has a dismal position.

4) Choice of openings—learning new lines—style

Obviously before playing a new opening or new opening line in an 'important' game, whether this is a critical league match or a weekend tournament where a loss can put you out of the prize list, a great deal of preparation needs to be done. To start with you can buy an opening monograph by a writer with a good reputation who can explain the ideas, plans, tactics and strategies as well as offering lines of play and hard analysis—but this is only half the battle. What you need is practical experience in order to get a feel for what is going on and to 'see' some of this theory put into practice over the board. To achieve this, playing some 'blitz' games with a friend in the privacy of your own home (or even down at the pub!) or at a club night can help, but as the opening is played at pace and you don't normally 'debrief' too much after the games, the benefit is limited. So what is the solution? I believe that I 'stumbled' across the answer almost by accident but first let me give you a little background history.

After I moved to Thailand I naturally found the best 'watering hole' for chess and this was at the Bangkok Chess Club. There I was to meet Kai. Finnish by birth, he had lived in Bangkok for some time and explained the difficulties Thai chess had faced. Firstly there was 'competition' from other pastimes which might normally attract the chess playing mind i.e. from Thai chess and Thai draughts. But the biggest threat was Go in which a great deal of money was being invested by a Chinese family who had

a particular interest in the game—and this had attracted some strong professional players from the East. With money comes interest and with strong players comes competition, as ‘locals’ strive to improve, compete and get their hands on the money too. Secondly, with chess sponsorship being scarce, it was hard to run even the more important events, let alone obtain a budget for coaching. Thirdly, and probably most importantly, it was difficult to get the infrastructure going at school level which was needed to provide a source of strong juniors. Therefore talented players not only tended to be few and far between but when they did get chess ‘in their blood’ they were coming into the game at a relatively late age.

When I came ‘onto the scene’ Kai was delighted and wanted to get me ‘involved’ with some of the stronger players who were likely to represent Thailand in the forthcoming Asean championships and the next Olympiad. As I actually live in Pattaya, which is 125 kilometres or so from Bangkok and it was obvious, at least in the short-term, that there was going to be little or no money available, we needed to find a practical solution. So I invited one of the younger and most talented players to come and stay for a weekend once a month to play some training games.

Taweechai, who is in his early twenties, is one of Thailand’s brightest prospects and was due to represent his country in the last Olympiad, only failing to do so when an administrative error resulted in Thailand’s non-participation. At Bangkok chess club tournaments are arranged each

week, when players are seeded into sections and an all-play-all 5, 10 or 15 minute blitz tournament takes place. This is both very practical and most enjoyable but it doesn’t give the Thai players a taste of what I would call ‘hard chess’, that is to say games played at a slower pace where judgement and strategic planning come into their own. Taweechai happens to be a very strong blitz player (around 2450) and therefore had some reservations as to the value of playing me in a training match but had enough about him to give it a go. I’ll let you judge from the games his reaction now! We alternated colours and before the game he told me what kind of ‘style’ of game he wanted to try. We are also planning, in the future, to agree which opening and opening line we are going to play so that both players can ‘prepare’ thoroughly. I am going to show you the first three of our training match games, played with one hour on the clock for all of the moves. However, it should be noted that in each case we spent more time looking at the game and ‘debriefing’ than we did playing the game itself. This philosophy has led to a greater understanding (for both of us) of various openings and the strategies involved for the forthcoming middlegames. I can recommend this method to any player who wishes to improve their game, it is only necessary to find a friend of similar strength, although it doesn’t matter if one player is perhaps up to 20 or 30 B.C.F. grading points higher. The length of time control, regularity of getting together and even the venue I will leave to yourselves—the important thing is to follow the principles behind the method.

White: Taweechai
Black: Chris Baker
Training match: Game 1
January 2002
Pirc Defence

1 d4 g6

Offering White the choice between playing 2 c4 or 2 f3 , when he can aim for King’s Indian positions, or continue with 2 e4 when Black has the choice of playing a Pirc or Modern Defence.

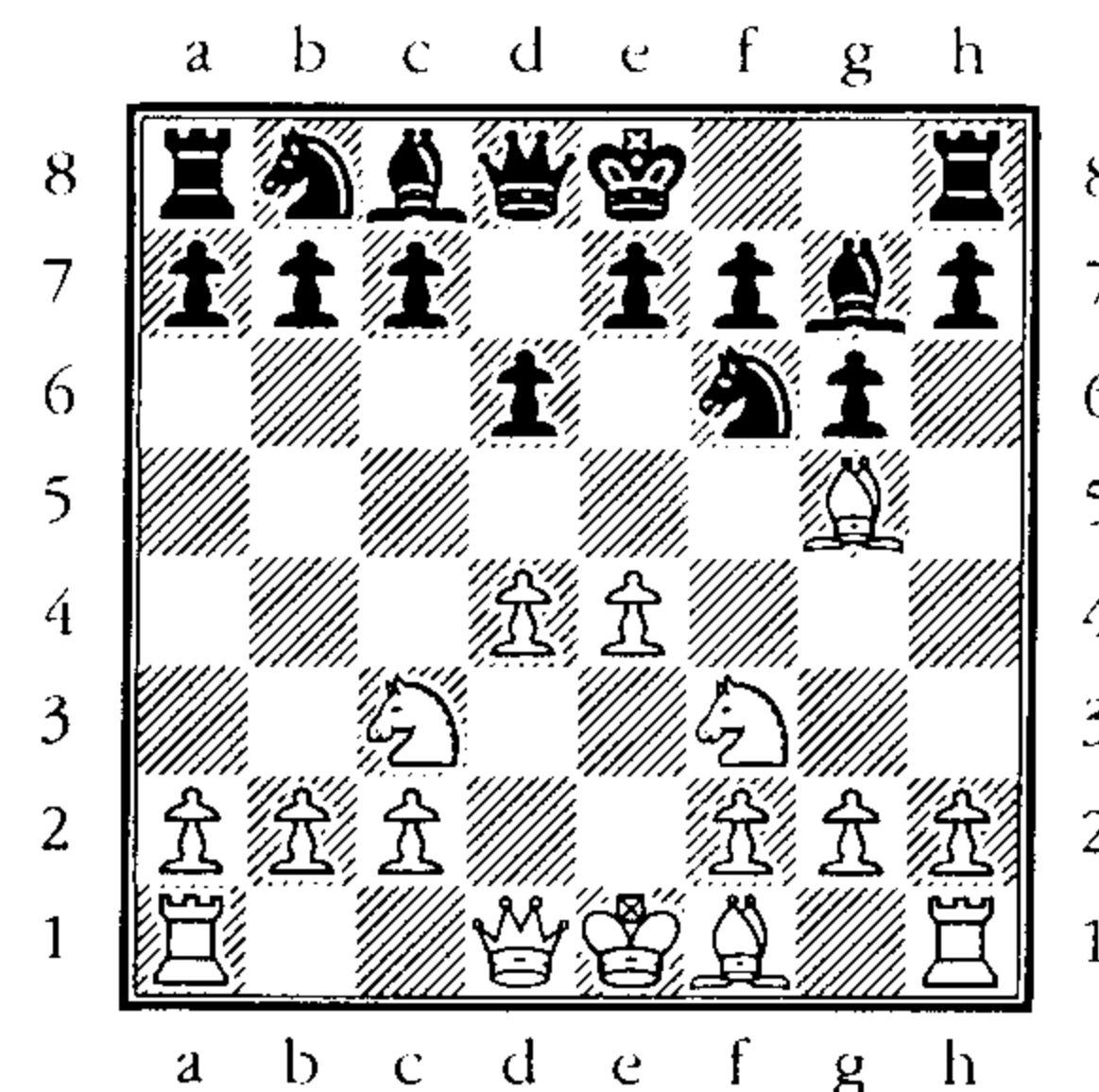
2 e4

White has made his choice.

2... g7 3 c3 d6 4 f3 f6

Now we have a Classical Pirc Defence.

5 $\text{g5!?$



Less usual than 5 e2 , 5 e3 or 5 h3 but the text ‘Byrne variation’ is perfectly viable.

5...c6

Black can also play 5...h6 (which creates a weakness) or 5...0-0 which I personally find too committal. I prefer to play 5...c6, retaining

maximum flexibility until my opponent’s intentions are clearer.

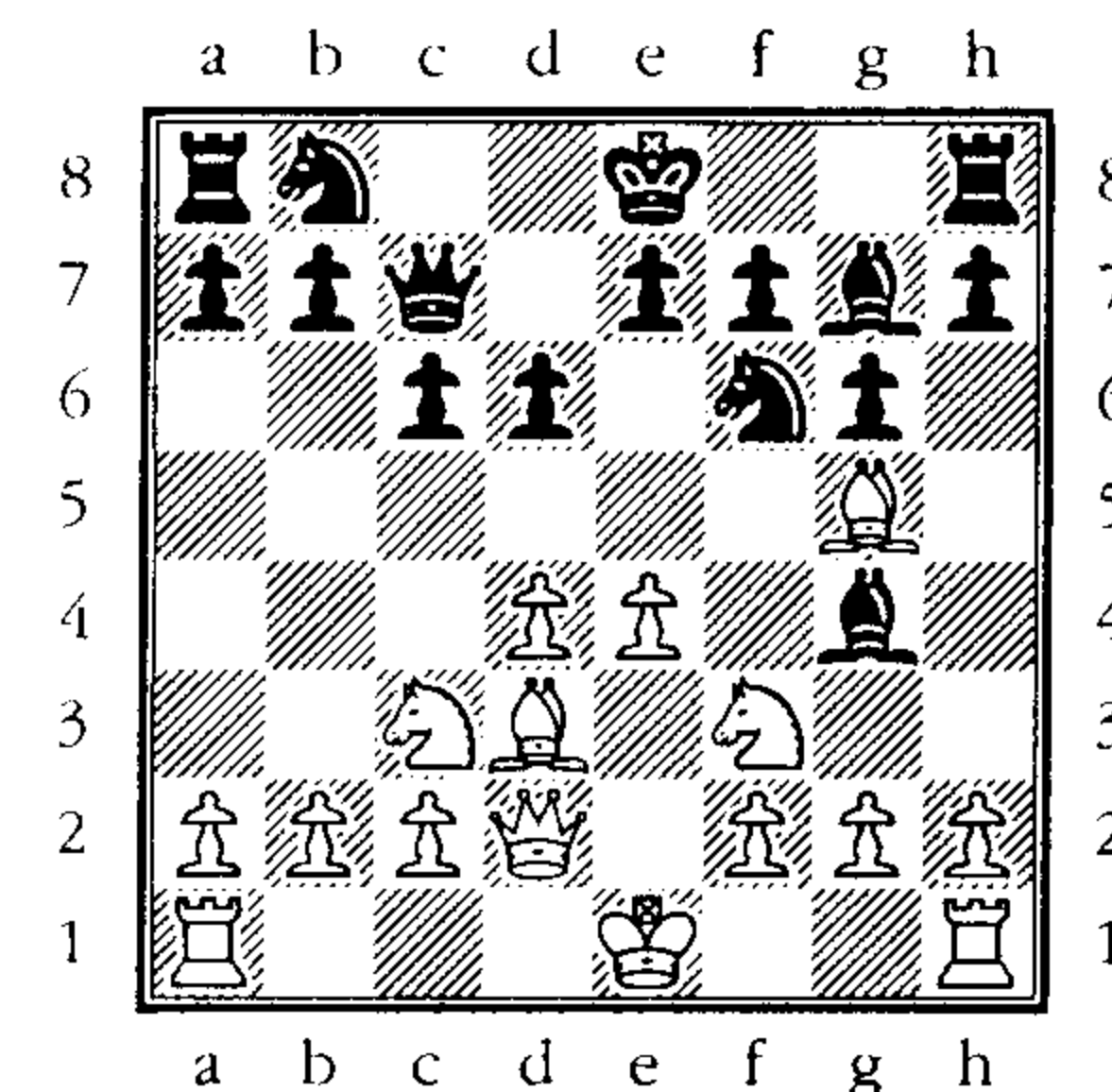
6 d3

6 d2 is more menacing while 6 h3 is the solid approach.

6... c7

Aiming to challenge the centre with ...e7-e5 while keeping open the option of playing ... c8-g4 .

7 d2 g4



8 h3?

After the game, I was very critical of this pawn advance as it forces Black to play a move he wants to make anyway and h3 doesn’t add anything to White’s position. He should therefore have played either 9 0-0, accepting doubled pawns in return for the bishop pair, extra space and a lead in development, or 9 $\text{g1!?$ with the idea of regaining some time with f2-f3 and redeveloping the knight from g1 to e2.

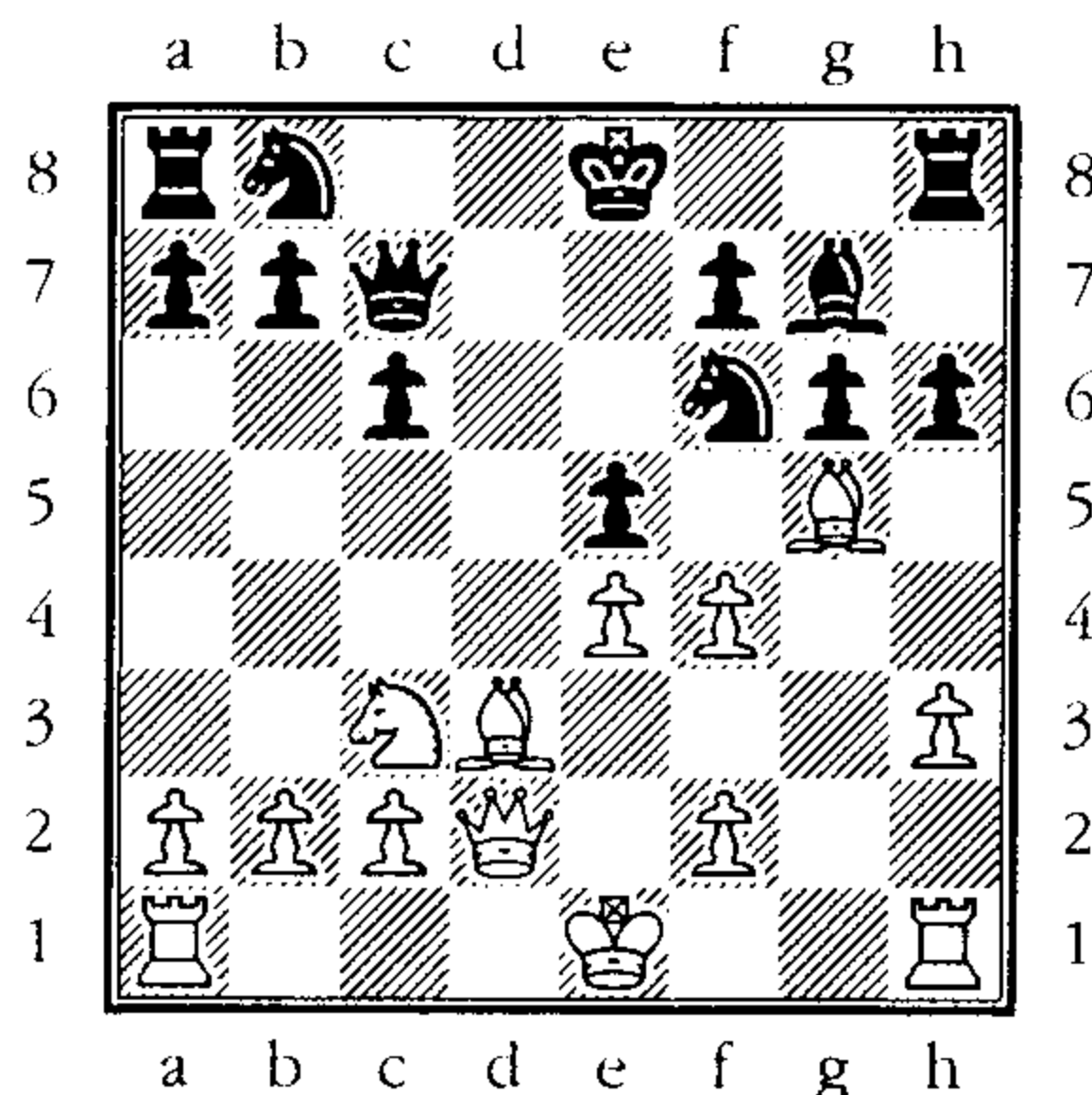
8... xf3 9 gx3 e5

I wanted to recapture some space while attempting to limit the scope of White’s bishop pair.

10 dx5 dx5 11 f4

While it is correct in principle to open up the position for the bishops, White had missed the fact that after Black's reply he couldn't maintain the bishop pair.

11...h6!



12 ♖xf6

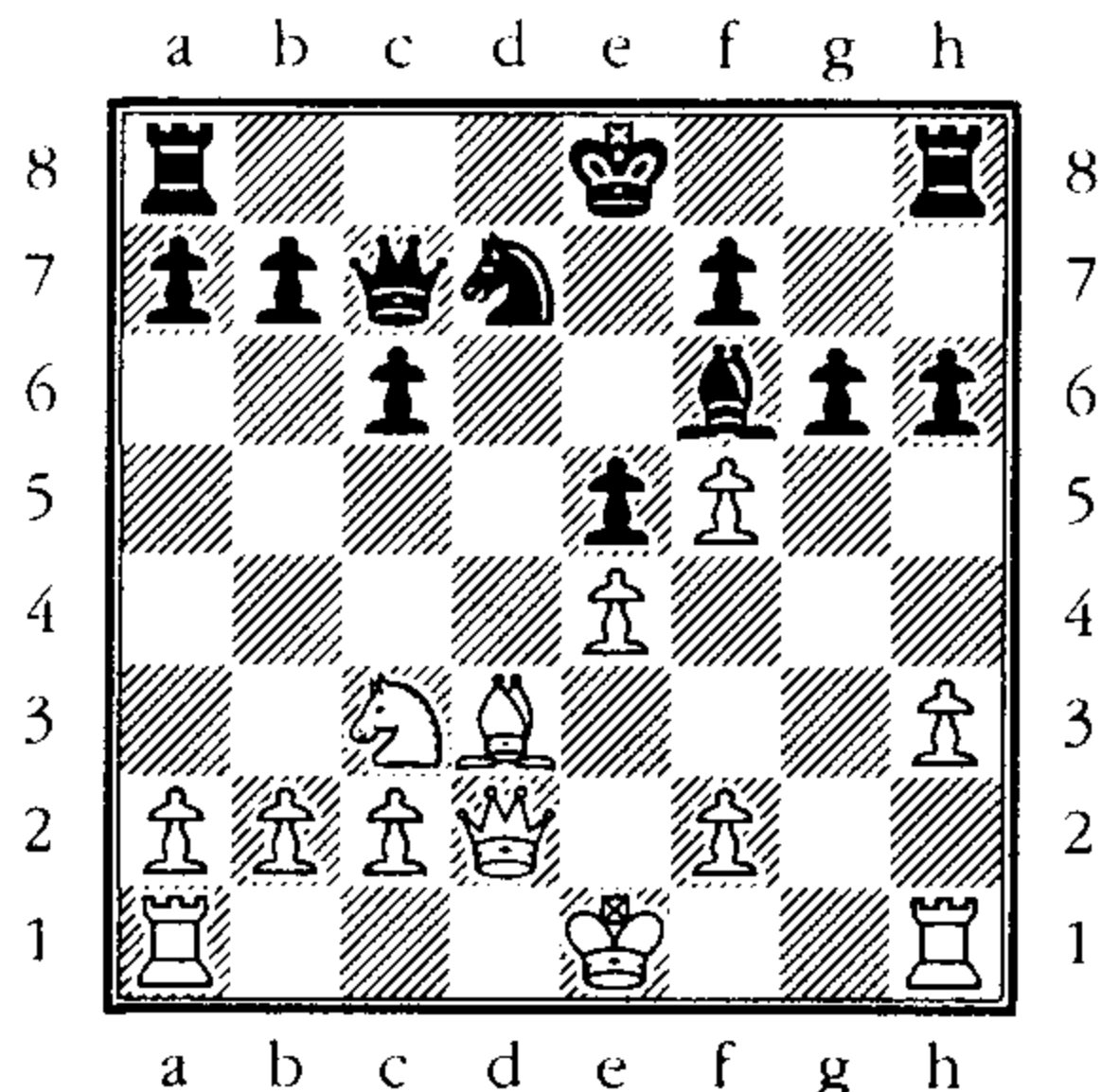
12 fxe5 hxg5 13 exf6 ♖xf6 would allow Black to enjoy a pleasant advantage after playing ...♟b8-d7, ...0-0-0, ...♞h8-h4 and ...♞d7 to either e5 or c5.

12...♖xf6 13 f5

White didn't want to exchange on e5, giving Black the a1-h8 diagonal for his bishop, but the move has the downside of instead conceding the c1-h6 diagonal.

13...♞d7

13...gxf5 has the disadvantage of giving White the e4 square for his knight and, while ...♖f6-g5 was also an option, I wanted to keep this move 'in the bag' as the 'threat is stronger than the execution'. Therefore I chose to continue with normal developing moves instead.



14 ♞d1?!

14 h4! is White's best chance so that he can castle long next move i.e. 14...0-0-0 15 0-0-0 ♞c5 16 ♜e3 ♜e7 when Black can claim only a nominal advantage. The problem with the move played is that White will not have time for ♞d1-e3 and castling long.

14...gxf5 15 exf5 0-0-0 16 ♜e3

After 16 ♞e3 Black has 16...e4!, giving White problems, e.g. 17 ♖xe4 ♖xb2 18 ♞b1 ♜e5. White must now either concede the exchange on b2 or castle, neither of which are particularly attractive.

16...♜a5+!

An awkward check for White to meet.

17 ♞c3

17 c3 is no better, e.g. 17...♖g5 18 ♜e2 ♞c5 19 ♖c4 ♞d2 20 ♜h5 ♜a4! 21 ♜xf7 ♞d7 giving White more headaches.

17...e4!

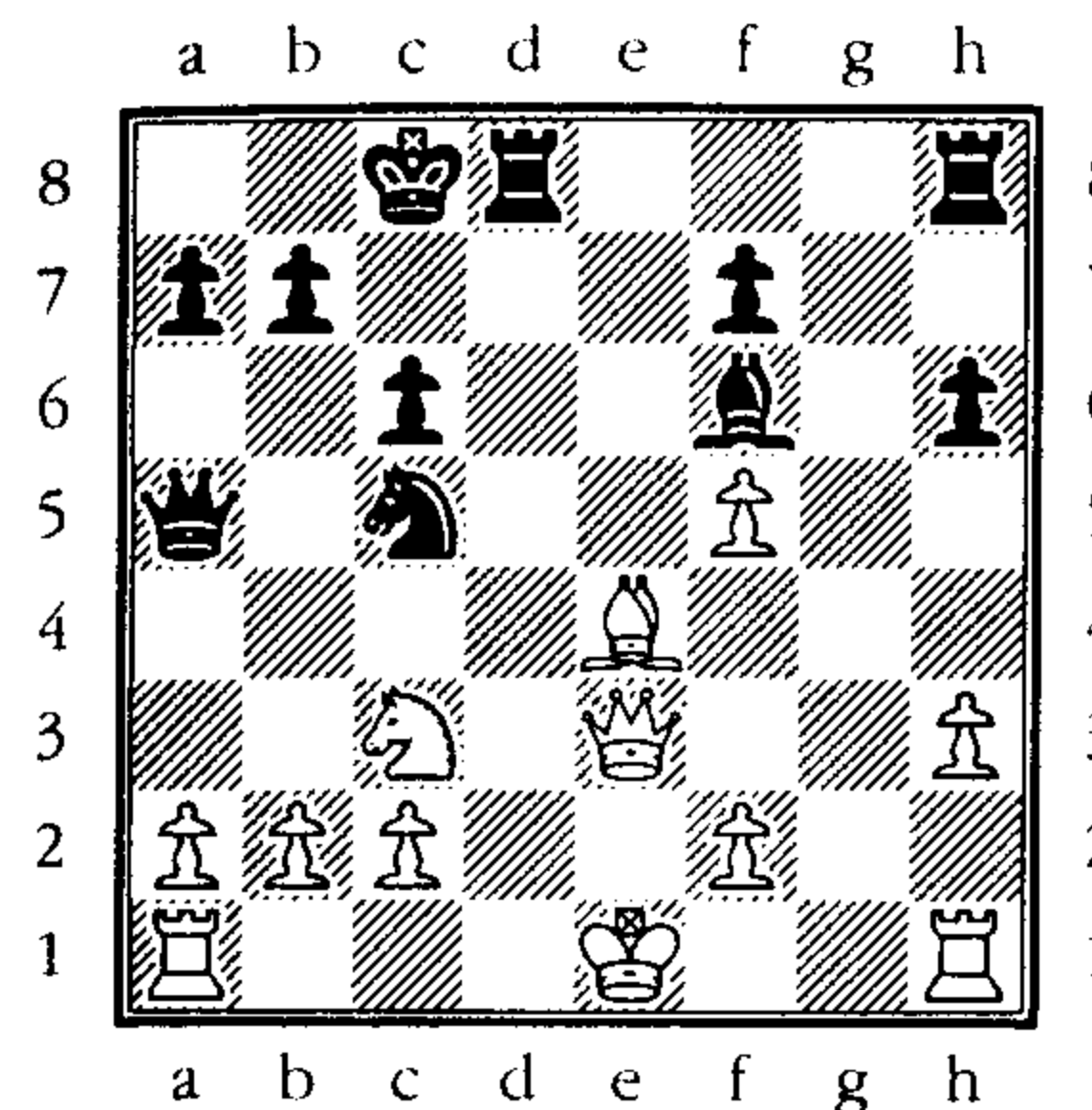
At the cost of a pawn Black is able to open things up while the

white king is still stuck in the centre.

18 ♖xe4

After 18 ♖e2 Black has 18...♞c5 with the idea, amongst others, of playing...♞c5-a4.

18...♞c5



19 0-0

If instead White unpins by 19 ♖f1 Black has 19...♜a6+ (19...♞he8 20 f3 ♖xc3 21 bxc3 ♞xe4 22 fxe4 ♜xf5+! 23 exf5 ♞xe3 leads to a very strong double rook ending for Black) and now:

a) 20 ♖d3 ♞xd3 21 cxd3 ♞he8 22 ♞e4 ♞xd3 23 ♞c5 ♞dx3+ 24 ♞xa6 ♞e2 25 ♞b4 ♞xb2 26 ♞d3 ♞d2 27 ♞e1 ♞xe1+ 28 ♞xe1 ♞xa2 with a winning endgame for Black.

b) 20 ♞e2 ♞xe4 21 ♜xe4 ♞he8 22 ♜g4 ♞d2 23 ♞e1 ♞xc2 and White is going to find it very hard not only to save his queenside but also to break the pin along the f1-a6 diagonal.

c) 20 ♖g1 ♜b6! White is now busted, e.g.

c1) 21 ♞e2 ♞he8 22 ♞g3 (22 f3 ♞xe4 23 ♜xb6 ♞g8+ 24 ♖f1 ♞d2+ and then ...a7xb6) 22...♖h4 and

White cannot cope with the pressure.

c2) 21 ♞d1 21...♞de8 22 f3 ♞xe4 23 ♜xb6 and now Black has the intermediate move 23...♞hg8+ when after 24 ♖f1 (24 ♖h2 ♖e5+ mates) 24...♞g3+ White is lost.

19...♞he8 20 ♜xh6

20 f3?? ♖d4 wins the queen.

20...♖xc3 21 ♖xc6 ♖d2 0-1

White resigns rather than concede further material. Before the return game that weekend Taweechai asked if I could play a 'slow' system and build-up, in order that he could 'get his teeth' into a middlegame/ending and hopefully experience some 'hard' chess.

White: Chris Baker

Black: Taweechai

Training Match: Game 2

January 2002

Petroff Defence

1 e4 e5 2 ♞f3 ♞f6

The Petroff Defence (sometimes known as the Russian Defence) has the reputation of being solid and a hard nut to crack.

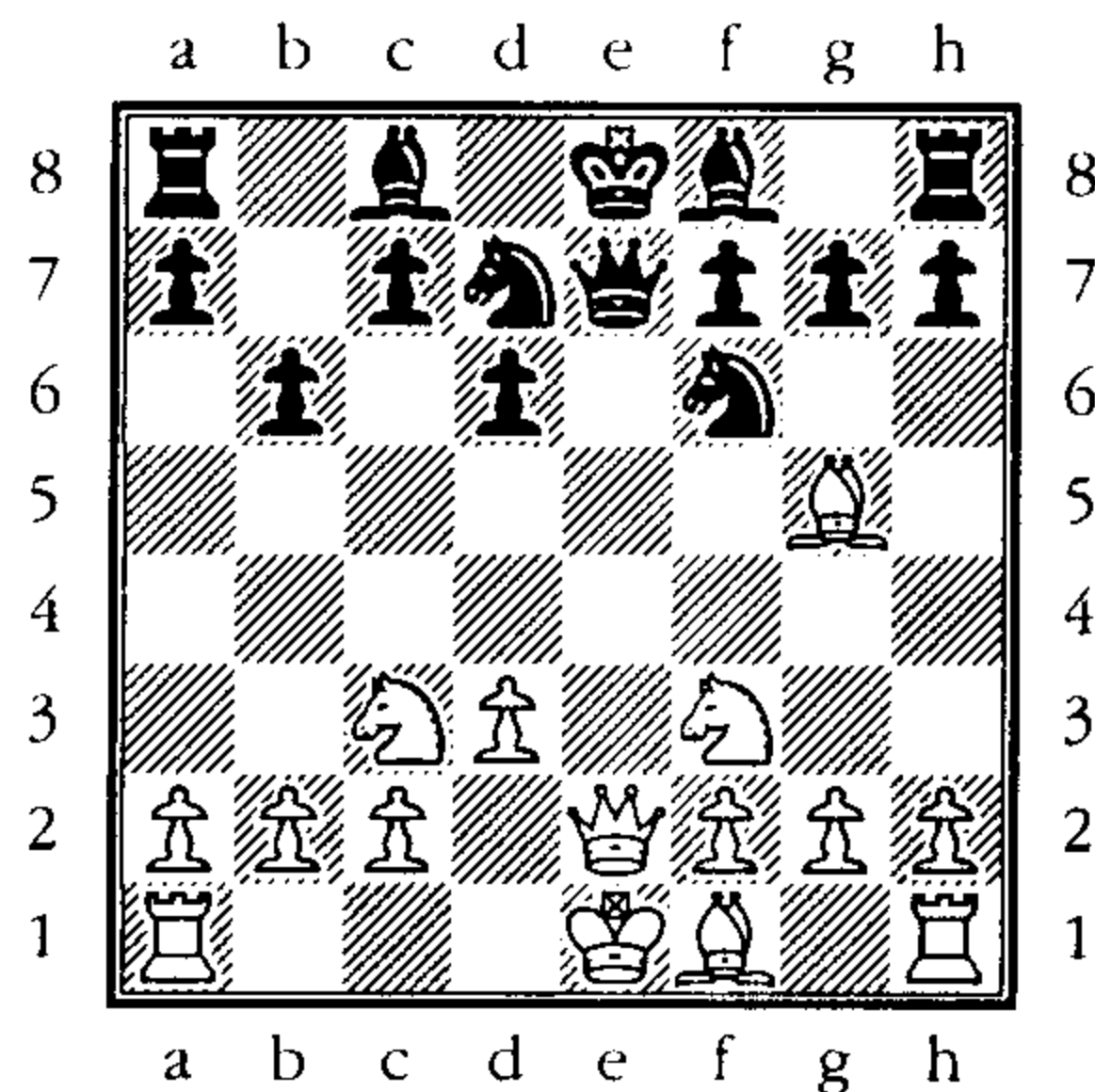
3 ♞xe5 d6 4 ♞f3 ♞xe4

Black probably expected me now to enter the popular and rather 'critical' positions resulting from 5 d4, but I had something different in mind. Incidentally, had Taweechai asked for something aggressive in the opening I might have 'chanced my arm' with 4 ♞xf7!? when White gets some good practical chances in return for the sacrificed piece.

5 ♜e2 ♜e7 6 d3 ♞f6 7 ♖g5 ♞bd7

7...♖xe2+ 8 ♔xe2 ♕e7 9 ♘c3 c6 is the solid approach as, in return for the tempo conceded in exchanging queens on e2, Black has no real weaknesses.

8 ♘c3 b6?!



Being unfamiliar with the variation, Black plays a move that gives White the type of position he was aiming for.

9 ♘e4

9 ♘b5 is very tempting but I was heading for a different kind of advantage.

9...♔b7 10 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 11 ♔xf6

With this simplification White will disrupt Black's pawn formation for the remainder of the game. On the other hand it does concede the bishop pair.

11...♖xe2+

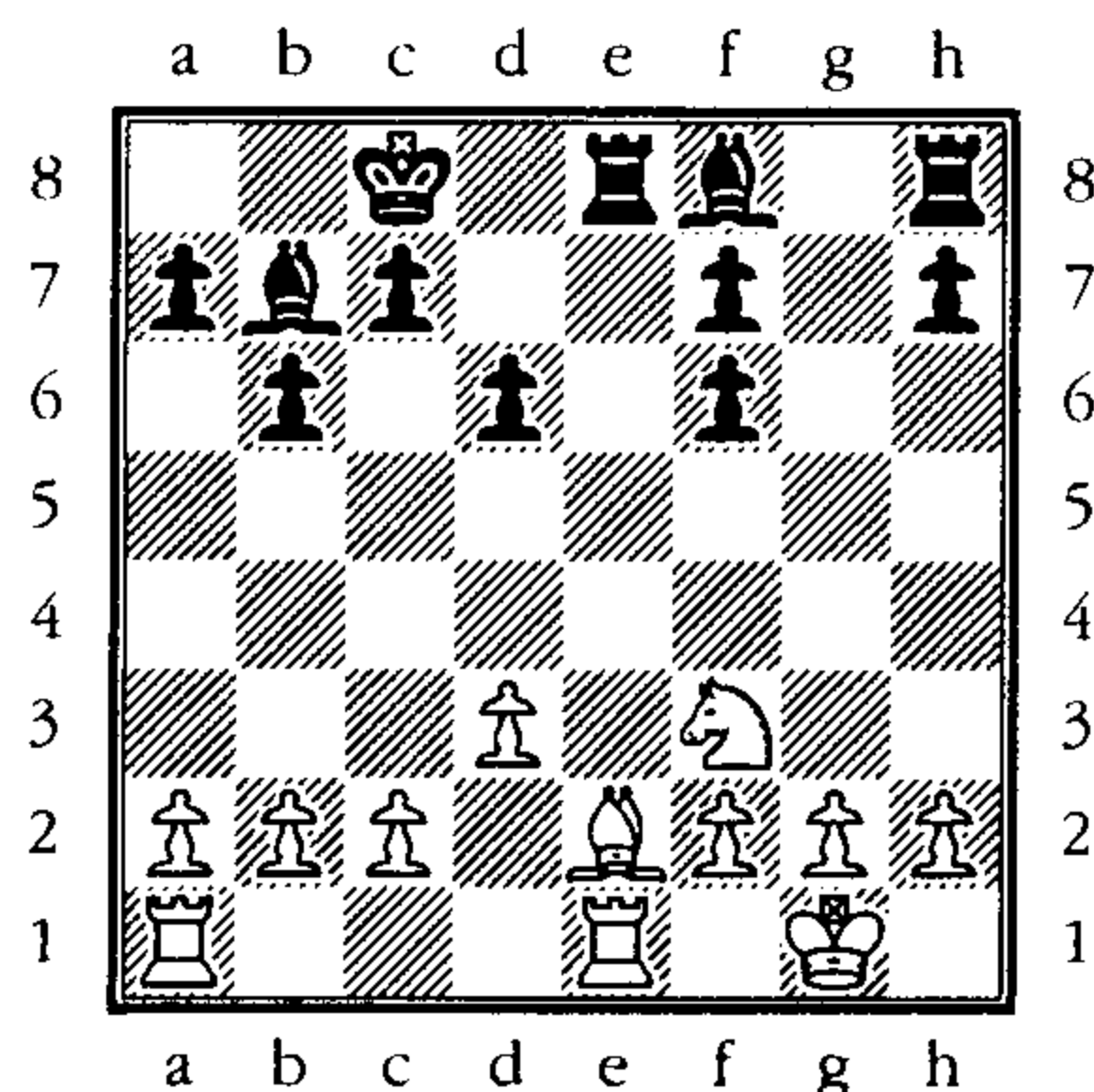
It would be a mistake to play 11...♔xf3 as then 12 ♖xe7+ ♔xe7 13 ♔xe7 wins a piece.

12 ♔xe2 gxf6 13 0-0 0-0-0 14 ♖fe1

White also wants to obtain more control of the only fully open file, the 'e'-file, for his rooks. Although

it looks as though Black can attack along the 'g'-file White remains very solid after g2-g3.

14...♖e8



15 ♘h4

I actually had quite a long think here deciding whether to play this or 15 ♘d4, with similar ideas. In retrospect I think ♘f3-d4 is the slightly stronger of the two moves.

15...♖e5 16 ♔g4+?!

Originally I had planned to play 16 ♔f3 but got side-tracked into playing the check. In some ways though, this is a mistake as it only brings Black's king closer to the centre of the board, ready for the queenless middlegame/endgame.

16...♔d8 17 d4 ♖g5 18 ♔f3 ♔c8 19 ♔c6

Not just to threaten the one-mover (♖e1-e8 mate) but to control the light squares. It would be in my own interests to exchange off the bishops as this gets rid of Black's only real asset—the bishop pair.

19...♔h6

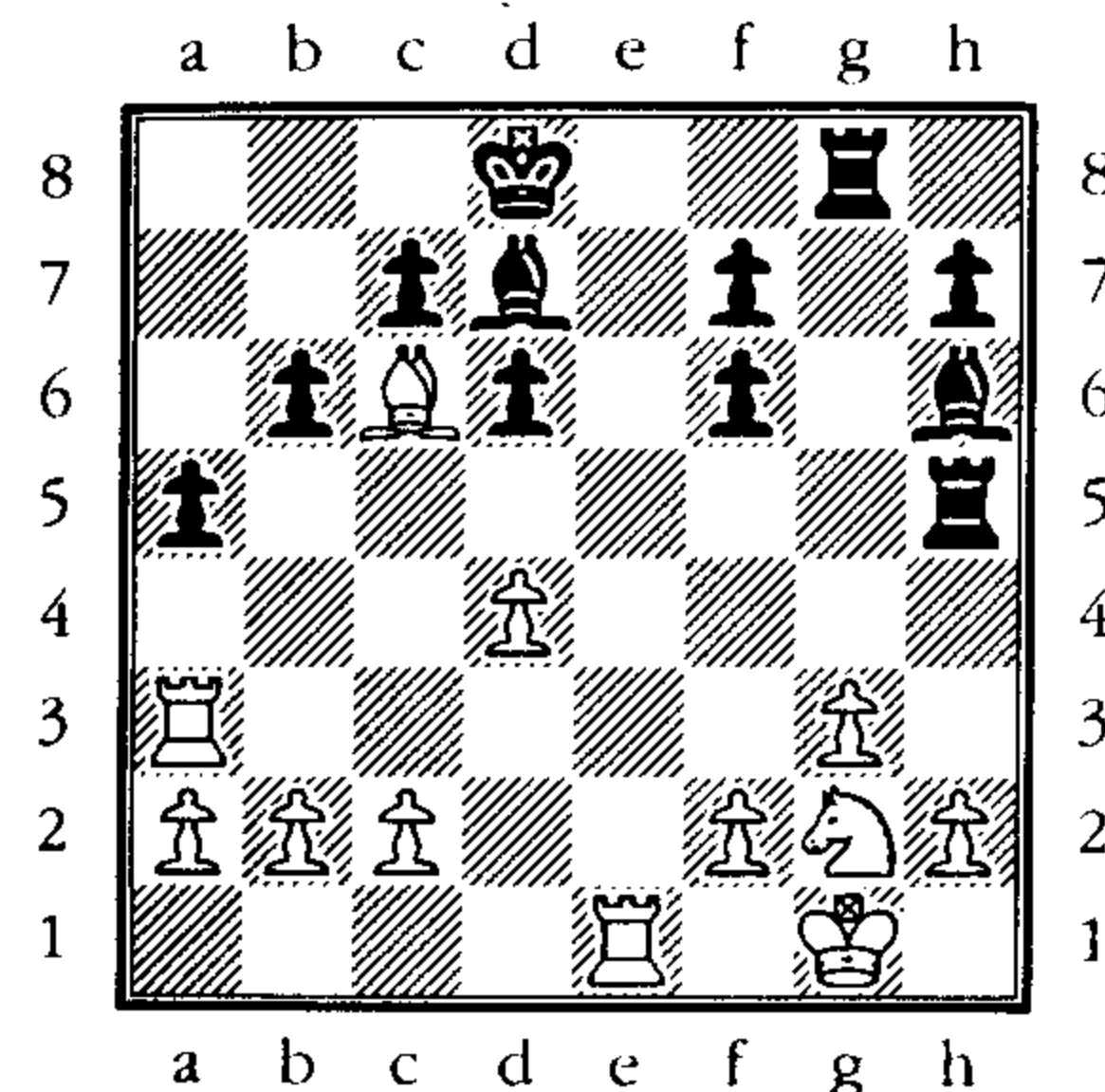
Now moves like 20 ♘f3 and 20 g3 come into consideration but I tried to use some of the potential

tactics to my advantage. With so many positional pluses, such as more space and the better pawn structure, this wasn't strictly necessary.

20 ♖e2 ♔a6! 21 ♖e3!?

21 ♖e4! f5 (21...d5 22 ♖e3 ♖h5 23 ♖a3 ♔c8 24 ♘f3 a5 25 ♖e1 maintains an edge for White) 22 ♘xf5 ♖xf5 23 ♖ae1 wins due to the threat of ♖e8+.

21...♖h5 22 ♖a3 ♔c8 23 g3 a5 24 ♖e1 ♖g8 25 ♘g2 ♔d7



Black takes the brave but correct decision to swap off the bishops, intending to defend precisely for the rest of the game.

26 ♔xd7 ♔xd7 27 ♖f3 f5 28 h4

28 d5! would leave Black with a cramped position.

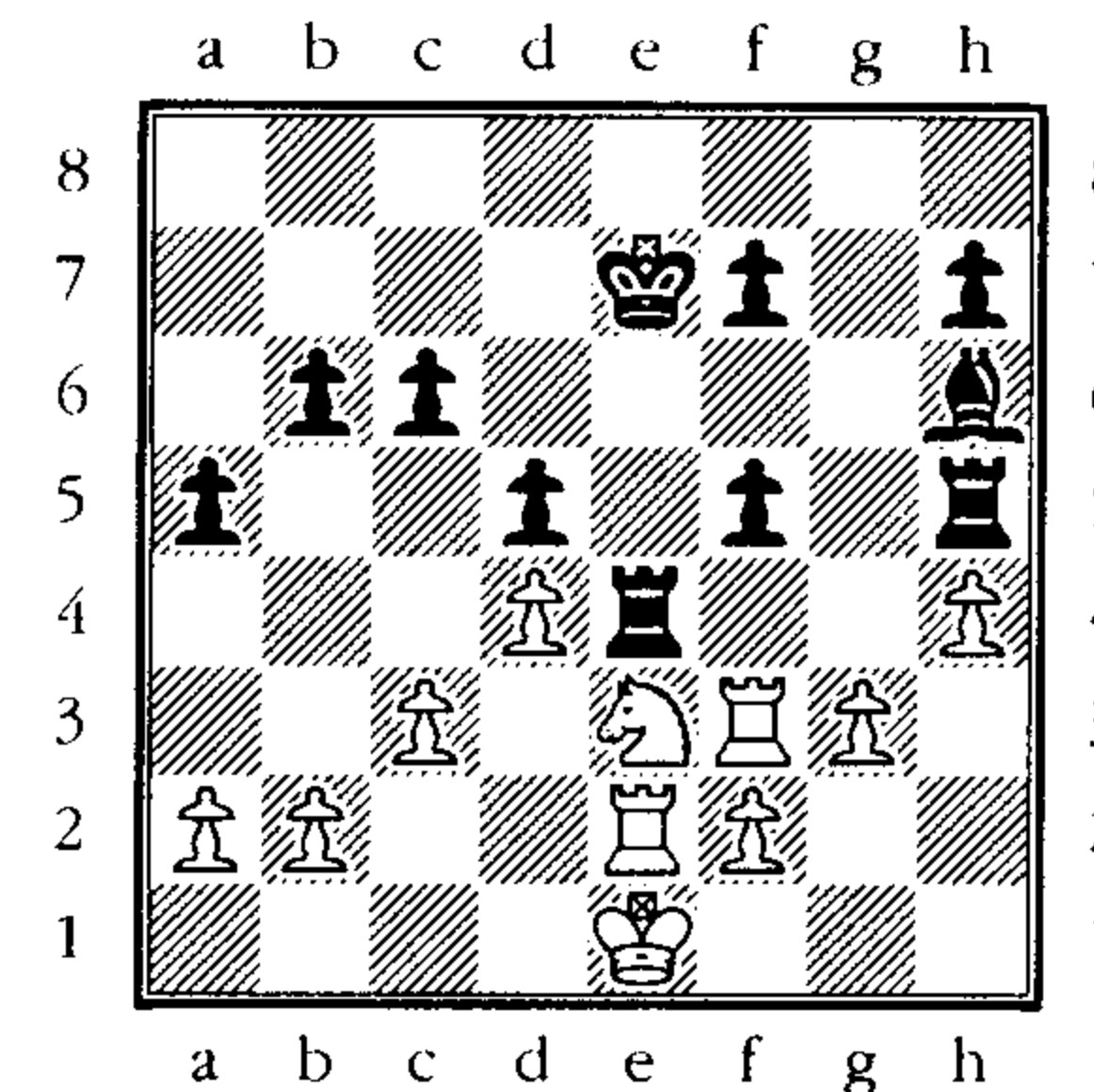
28...♖e8 29 ♔f1 d5 30 ♖e2?! ♖e4!

Using the 'turning point' on e4 to his advantage. A turning point is a well supported square on which your opponent doesn't really want to exchange pieces and therefore helps you to contest or take control of a file.

31 c3 c6 32 ♔e1 ♔e7

32...a4!?

33 ♘e3



33...♔xe3

Black is a little too eager to exchange off the bishop. 33...♔e6 asks White how he is able to continue with any real effect.

34 ♖fxe3 ♔d6

34...♖xe3? 35 ♖xe3+ ♔d6 would have only returned the favour of giving up control of the 'e'-file.

35 ♔d2 ♖h6

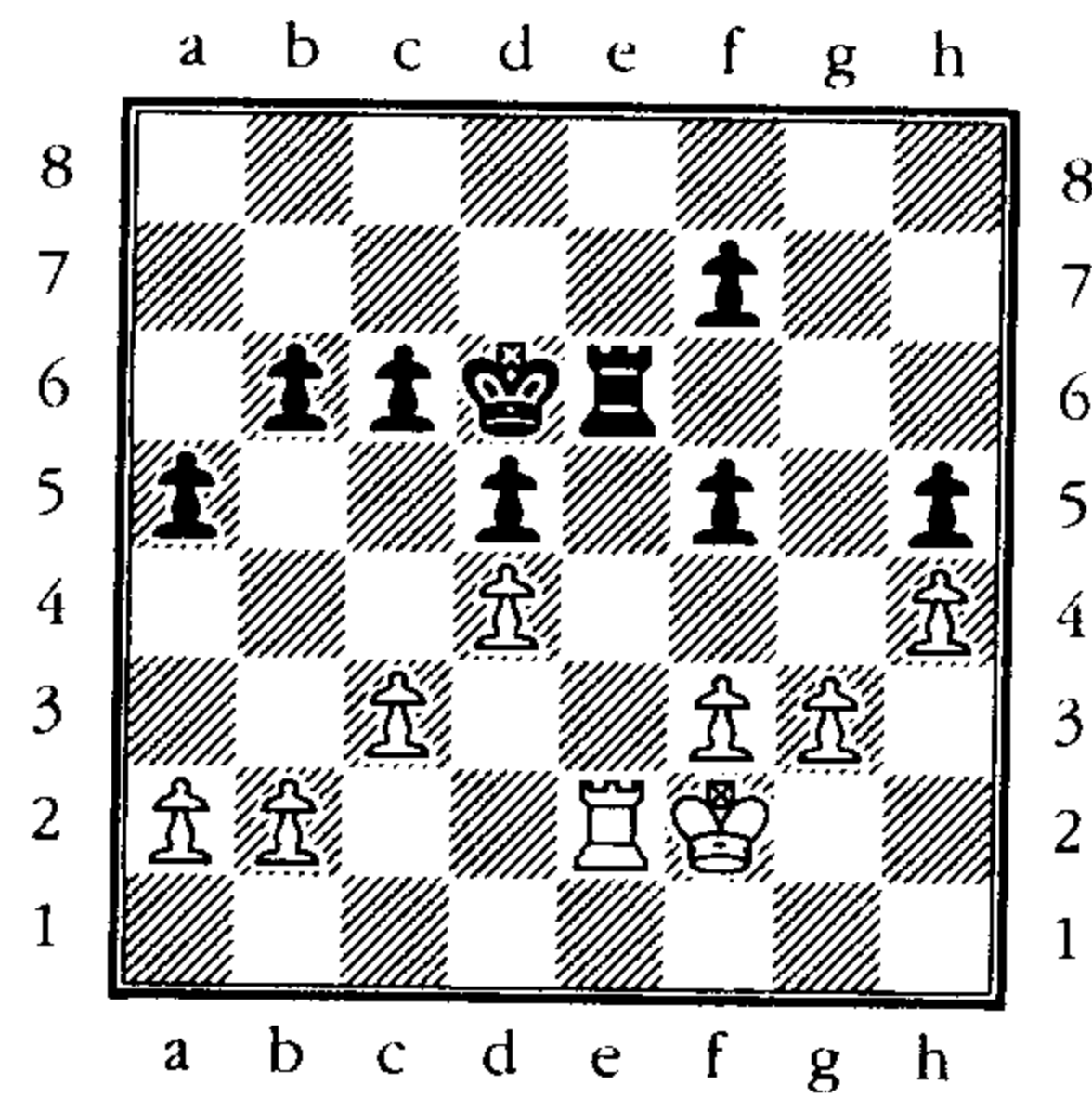
35...♖xe3 36 ♔xe3! (36 ♖xe3 f4! solves a lot of Black's problems) 36...♖h6 37 ♔f4 ♖e6 38 ♖e3! (38 ♖e5 ♖xe5! 39 dxe5+ ♔e6 leaves Black with all the chances in the resulting king and pawn ending thanks to his more mobile pawn majority) 38...♖xe3 39 fxe3! ♔e6 40 ♔g5 and Black's chances of survival are minimal.

36 f3

Better is 36 ♖f3 ♖f6 37 ♖xe4! dxe4 38 ♖f4 which leaves Black with more problems than in the game.

36...♖xe3 37 ♔xe3 ♖e6+ 38 ♔f2 h5

38...a4!?



39 ♖xe6+!

Despite 'straightening' Black's pawns, entering the king and pawn ending has more 'bite' to it than first meets the eye.

39...fxe6

Taking with the king is weaker, i.e. 39...♖xe6 40 ♖e3 a4 41 ♖f4 ♖f6 42 g4 fxg4 43 fxg4 and Black must play 43...♖g6 since he cannot afford to leave White with the outside passed pawn after 43...hxg4. After that, White will sooner or later exchange the 'h'-pawn for the 'f'-pawn and his king will be two ranks closer to picking up the pawns on the queenside.

40 ♖e3 e5!

Black cannot allow ♖e3-f4.

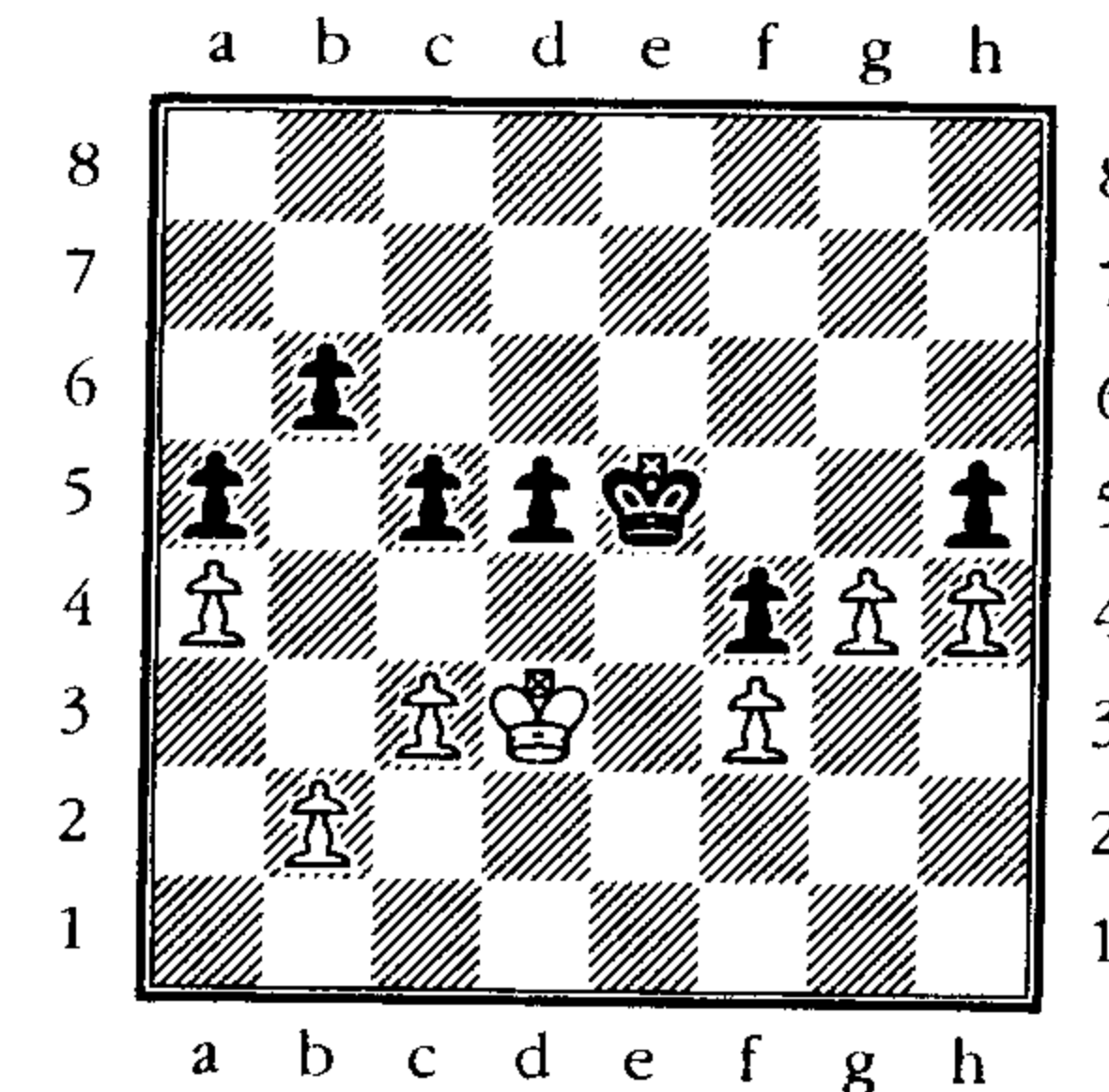
41 dxe5+ ♖xe5 42 ♖d3 f4?

Black underestimated the reply—he should have played 42...b5.

43 g4 c5 44 a4

Restricting Black's queenside, whereas after 44 gxh5? Black plays 44...♖f6!, taking the long route to eat up White's 'h'-pawns. Then there would follow 45 c4 d4 46 ♖e4

♖g7 47 ♖xf4 ♖h6 48 ♖g3 ♖xh5 49 a4 d3 50 ♖f2 ♖xh4 51 ♖e3 ♖g3 52 f4 d2 53 ♖xd2 ♖xf4 leading to a draw after 54 ♖d3 ♖f3 55 b3 ♖f4 56 ♖d2 ♖e4 57 ♖e2! (57 ♖c3?? ♖e3 58 ♖c2 ♖e2 59 ♖c3 ♖d1 60 ♖b2 ♖d2 61 ♖a2 ♖c2 62 ♖a3 ♖b1 and Black wins!) 57...♖d4 58 ♖d2 and Black cannot make progress.



44...hxg4?

Black misses his last chance to hold the game by 44...c4+! 45 ♖d2 ♖f6 46 g5+ ♖f5 as White cannot make further progress.

45 fxg4 ♖f6

After 45...d4 46 cxd4+ cxd4 47 h5 Black's passed pawns are no match for White's connected ones.

46 c4! d4 47 ♖e4 ♖g6 48 ♖xf4 ♖f7 49 h5 ♖g7 50 g5

White must create enough of a threat before his king deserts its role of stopping Black's own passed pawn.

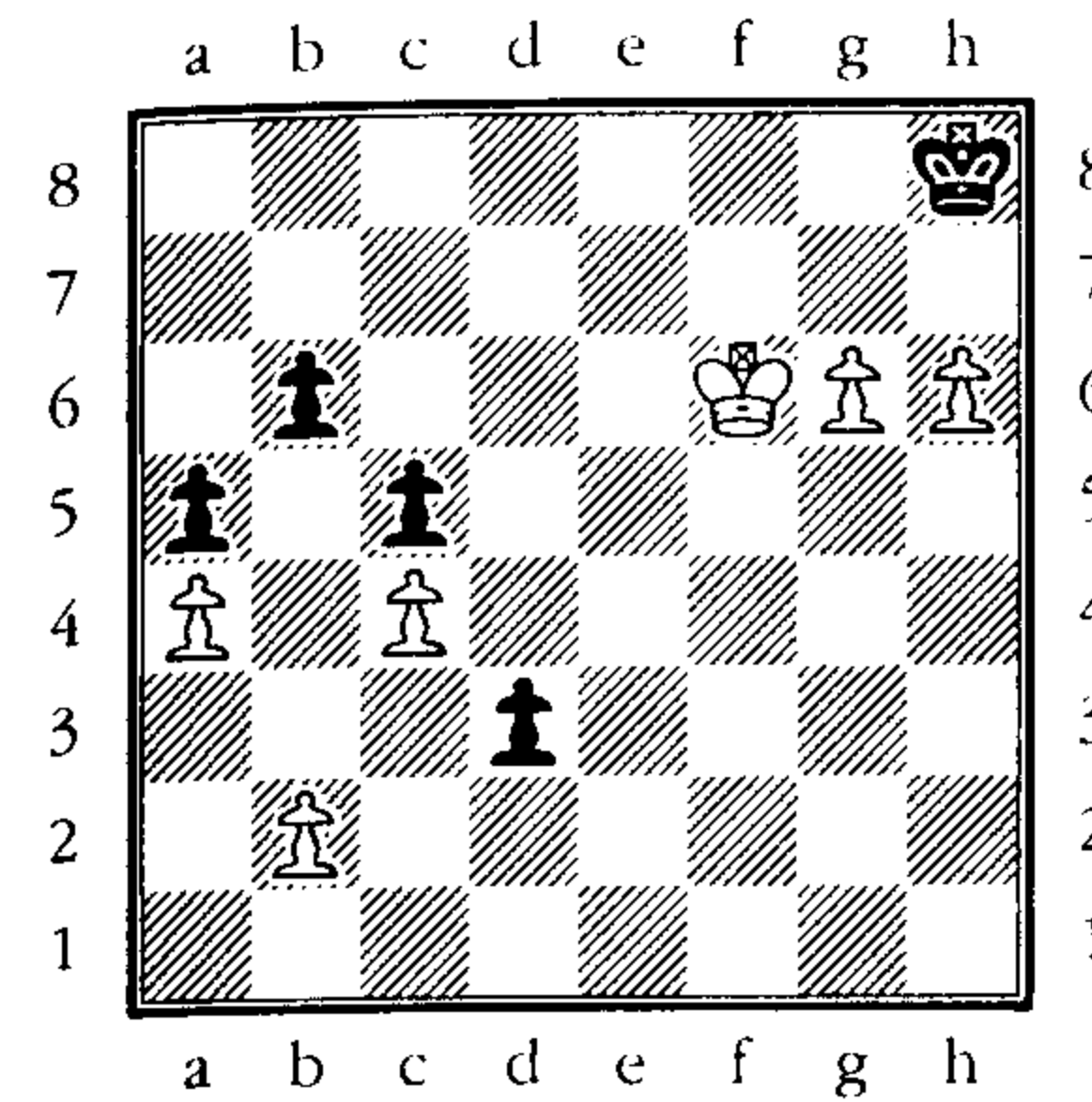
50...♖g8 51 g6 ♖g7 52 ♖g5!

White will succeed in his task—by one tempo.

52...d3 53 h6+ ♖h8

53...♖g8 54 ♖f6 ♖f8 55 h7 and White queens with check.

54 ♖f6 1-0



As 54...d2 55 ♖f7 d1=♖ 56 g7+ ♖h7 57 g8=♖+ ♖xh6 58 ♖g6 is mate.

The third training game was played at the end of the same month and was spoilt a little by an uncharacteristic tactical blunder by Taweechai. Up to that point he was holding his own and a hard battle could have been envisaged—however, this in itself suggests that he had become mentally stronger and would soon be ready for bigger and better things.

White: Taweechai

Black: Chris Baker

Training Match: Game 3

January 2002

Dutch Defence

1 d4 e6

As in game one, on my first move I decided to offer a transpositional possibility—in this case after 2 e4 we would enter a French Defence.

2 c4

This time White declines the bait, wanting instead to keep the game in more 'formal' d4 opening lines.

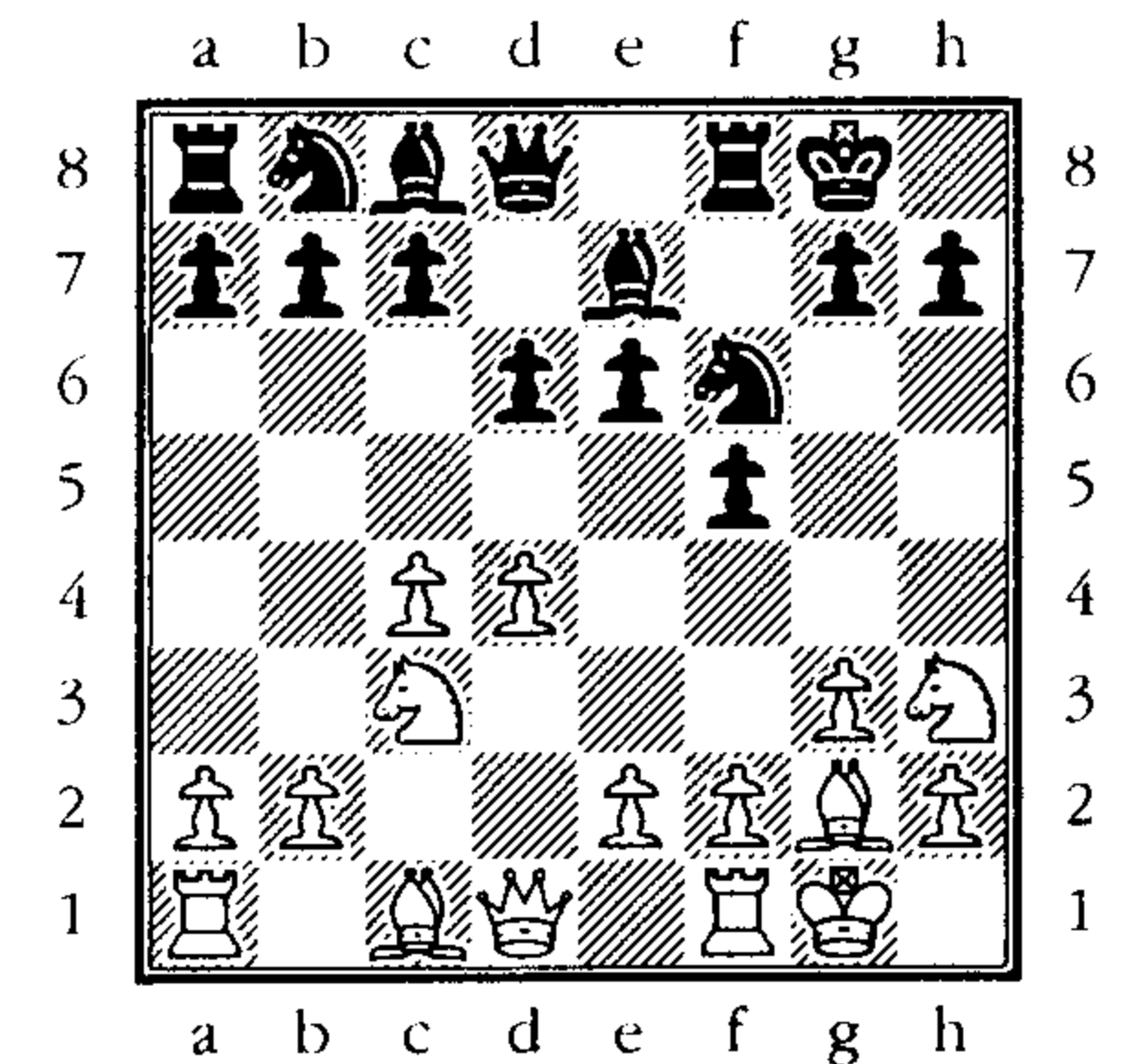
2...f5

Entering the Dutch Defence.

3 ♖c3 ♖f6 4 g3 ♖e7 5 ♖g2 0-0 6 ♖h3

The knight aims to occupy the f4 square at the most appropriate moment.

6...d6 7 0-0



7...e5!?

It is normal for Black to play 7...♖e8 here and then to meet 8 ♖f4 with 8...e5. I felt happy at the time to play the immediate ...e6-e5 but now I'm not so sure.

8 d5!

This 'solidifies' the centre while gaining space.

8...a5 9 f3!?

Aiming to support the centre prior to playing e2-e4. Also interesting is 9 ♖g5!? while 9 f4 is another way of contesting the centre although it creates some weaknesses, especially on the g1-a7 diagonal.

9...♖a6 10 ♖f2 ♖c5 11 b3 ♖d7 12 ♖b1

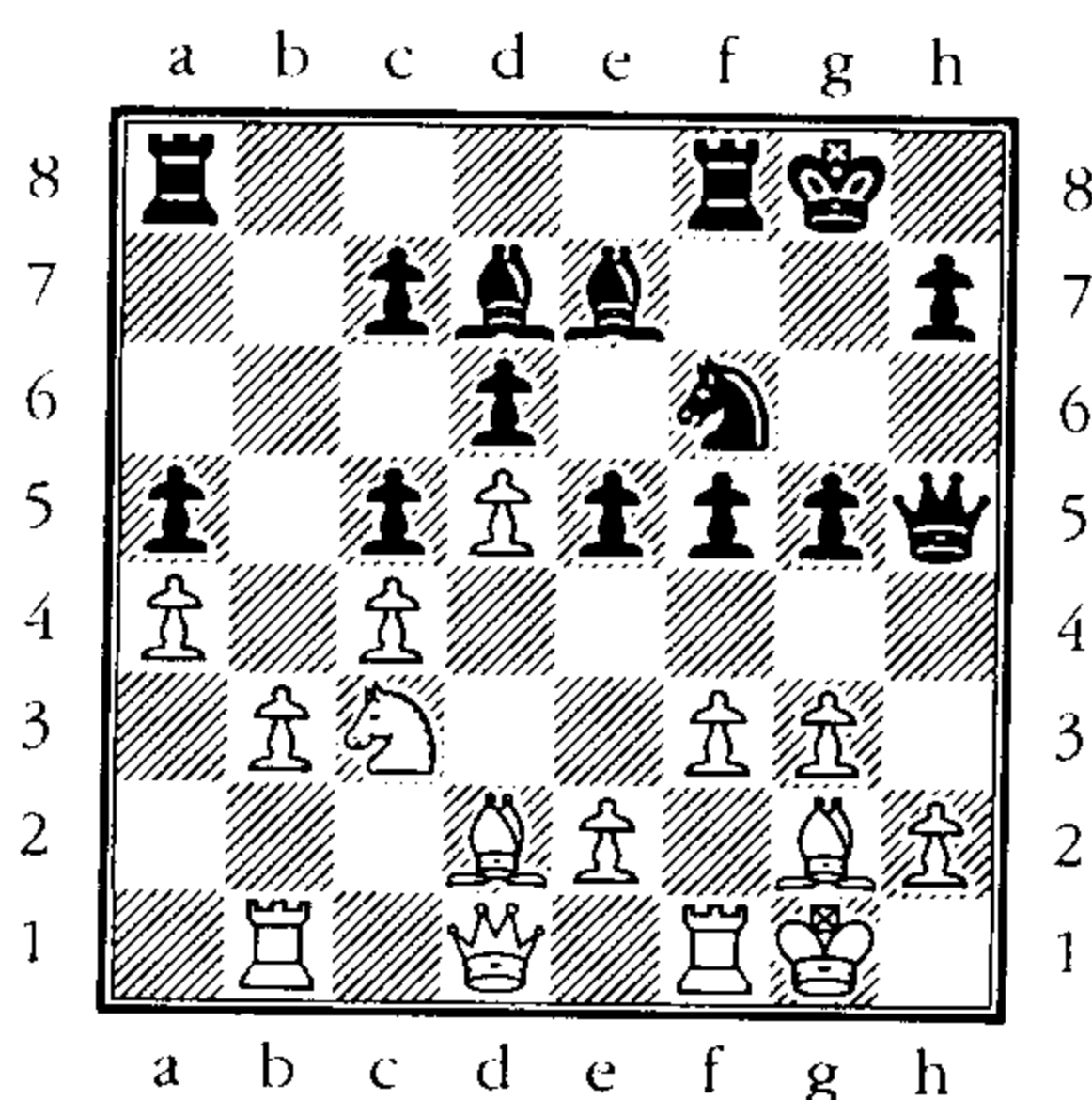
12 ♖d3 b6 13 a3 also keeps the position tense.

12...♖e8 13 ♘d3 b6 14 ♘xc5

White hopes that Black's 'a'-pawn will become a source of weakness but White should not disregard Black's counter-chances on the kingside.

14...bxc5 15 a4 ♖h5 16 ♔d2 g5

Here they come!



17 ♖e1!

After 17 ♘b5 ♔d8 White has no way in other than by playing ♖d1-e1 and ♔d2xa5, but this all takes time.

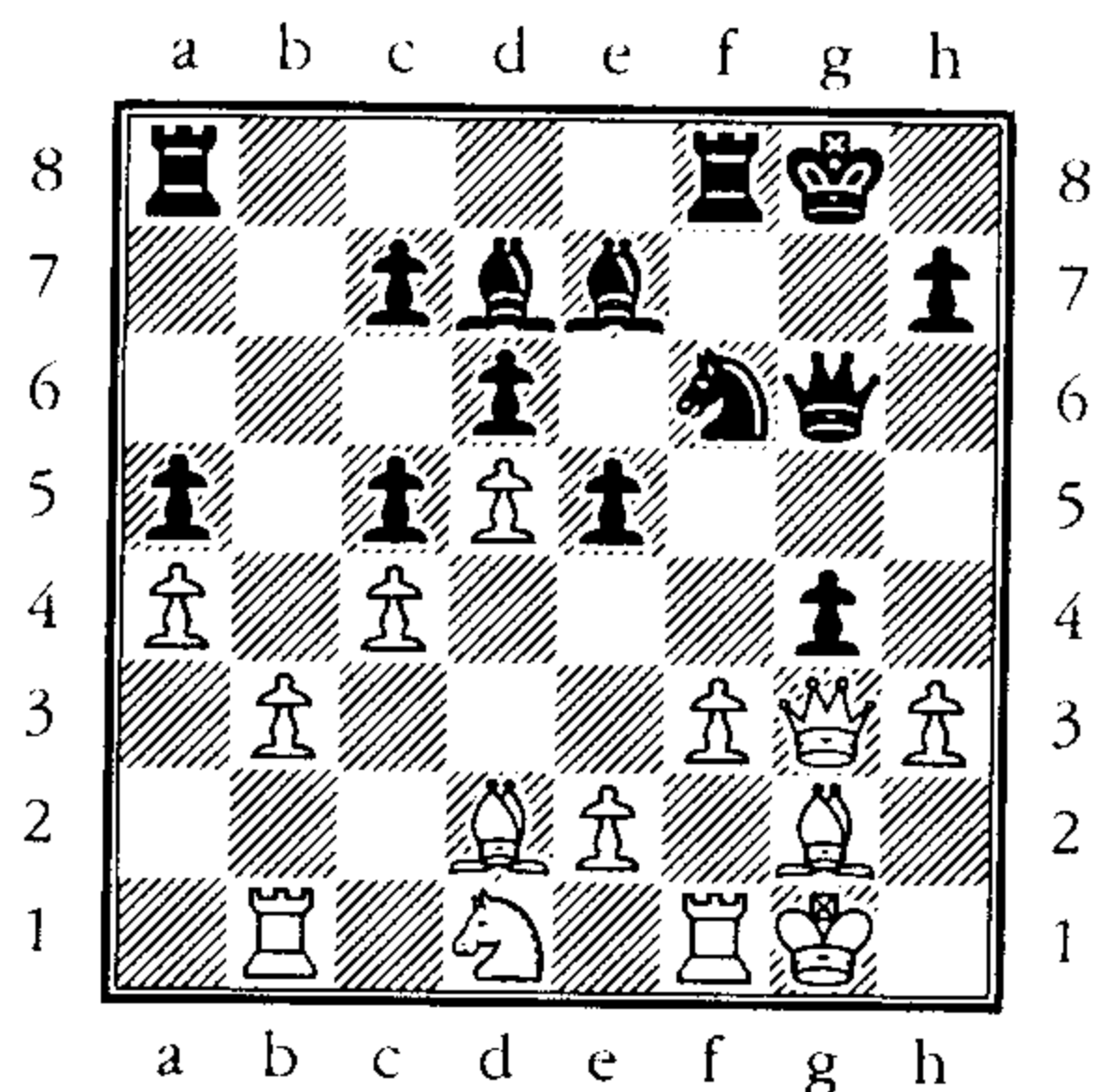
17...f4 18 ♘d1

18 g4 is a more solid way of handling the position, e.g. 18...♖g6 19 ♘b5 ♔d8 20 ♔xa5 and now after 20...c6 (20...♖xa5!? 21 ♖xa5 c6 22 ♖a6 cxb5 23 ♖xd6 bxa4 24 bxa4 ♔xa4 25 ♖b2 e4! 26 ♖a1 exf3! 27 exf3 ♖d3 is very unclear) 21 ♔xd8 ♖fxd8 (21...cxb5 22 ♔xf6 bxa4! 23 ♔xe5! dxe5 24 bxa4 ♖xa4 25 ♖c3 ♖d6 White is a sound pawn ahead but his bishop is a poor piece) and now White can maintain an advantage with either 22 dxc6 or 22 ♘xd6.

18...fxg3 19 ♖xg3 g4 20 h3??

20 ♘f2 leaves the game in the balance.

20...♖g6!



By hitting b1 Black gains a vital tempo.

21 ♘f2 ♘h5 1-0

22...g3 will come with devastating effect.

5) Understanding standard and re-occurring themes in an opening

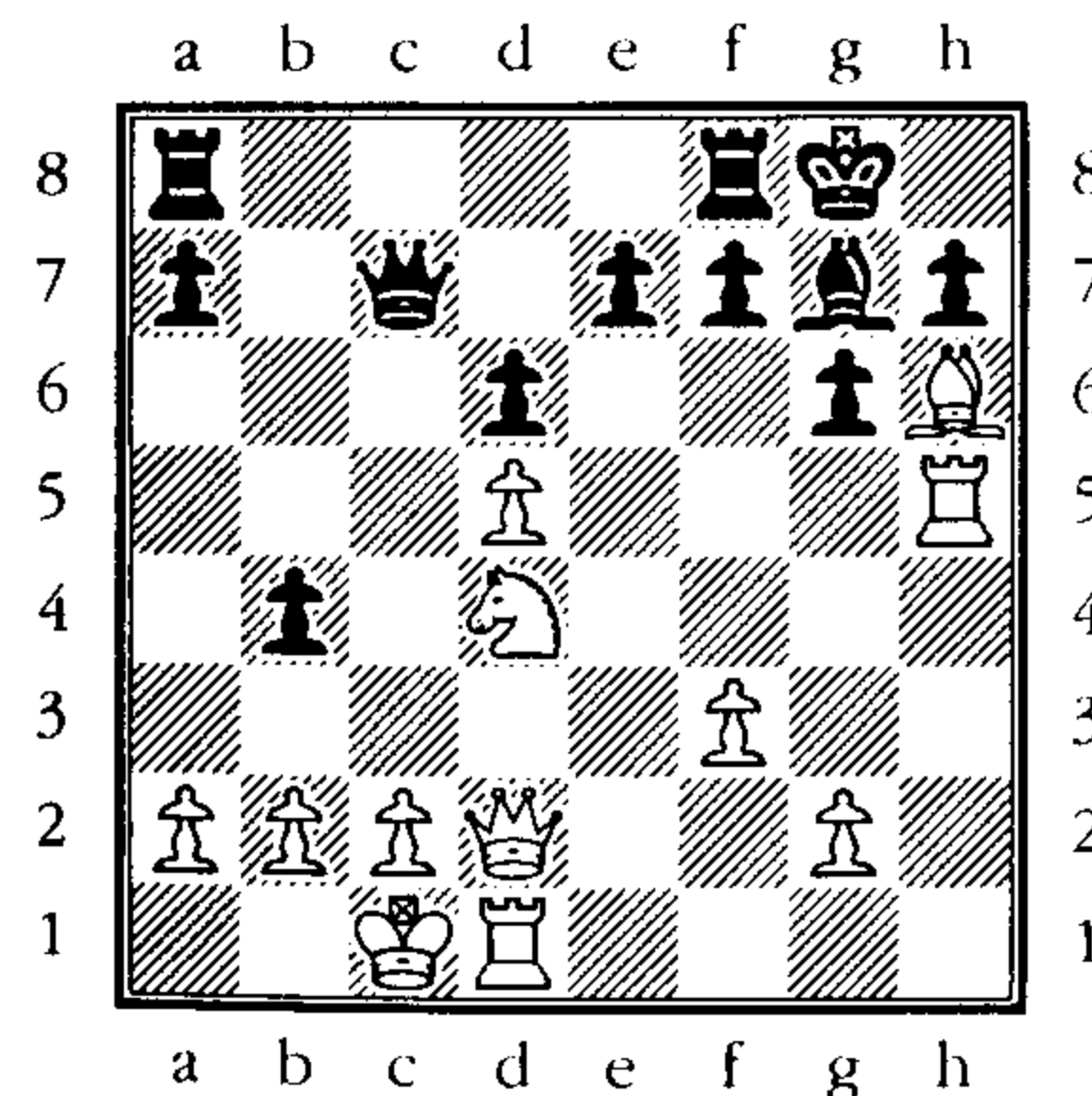
In many openings there are ideas and tactics that re-occur in several different variations—by learning these in the openings you play yourself you get a chance to 'make them fit' even in an unfamiliar position. For instance, in the main lines of the Sicilian Dragon it is well-known that Black will strive to give up the exchange on c3 to wreck the opponent's queenside pawn structure and create weaknesses that will enable him to attack the white king; meanwhile White will aim for h2-h4-h5, offering first a pawn and then, after ...♘f6xh5, the exchange with ♖h1xh5. Let us see how this basic knowledge made it easy for White in the following game:

White: Simon Buckley
Black: Paul Butterworth
Hanham Open 1997
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♔g7 3 ♘c3 c5 4 ♘f3

Allowing a transposition into a Sicilian Dragon. Incidentally, Simon is himself an exponent of the Dragon, while Paul usually plays the Modern/Pirc. Because of this Simon had a far better idea of how to handle the position.

4...cxd4 5 ♘xd4 ♘c6 6 ♔e3 ♘f6 7 ♘b3 0-0 8 ♔e2 b6 9 ♖d2 d6 10 f3 ♔e6 11 0-0-0 ♘a5 12 ♔h6 ♘c4 13 ♔xc4 ♔xc4 14 h4 b5 15 h5 ♖c7 16 ♘d4 b4 17 ♘d5 ♔xd5 18 exd5 ♘xh5?? 19 ♖xh5 1-0



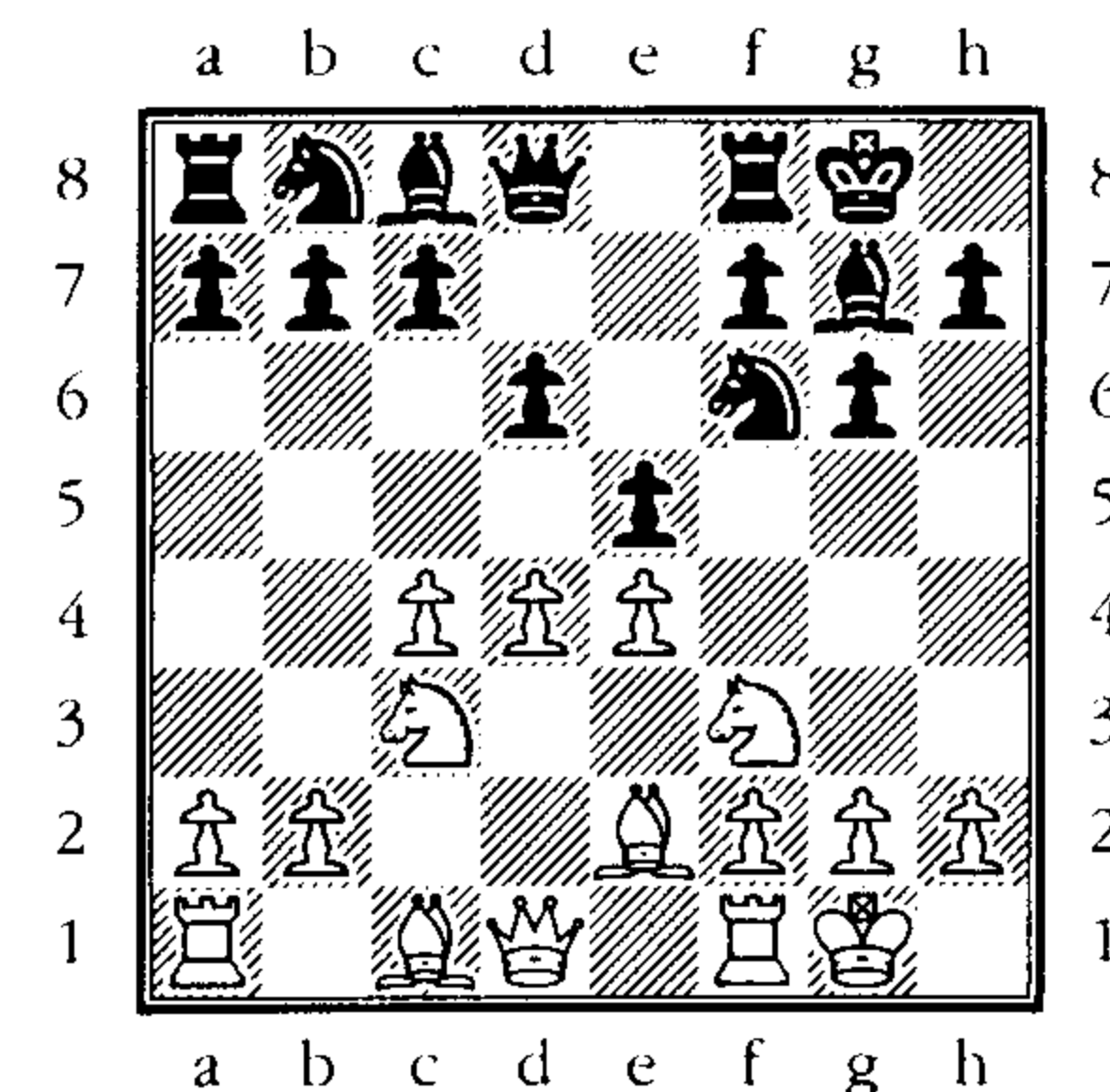
As after 19...gxh5 20 ♖g5 mates.

In the next game, on move seven, Black chooses a slightly 'offbeat' variation which is certainly not 'bad' but possibly has some long-term positional flaws that may make it difficult for him to achieve full equality. However, as a counterbalance, it has the benefit of providing active play, especially in the tactical sense, and I suspect that

Black played it because this type of position suited him. There is a very important point here in that the stronger player, especially with Black, has to make the decision to take a 'slight risk' in order to get the opponent out of his main 'book' and leave him on his own resources. This 'risk' should be calculated to 'steer' the opponent away from the type of positions he handles well.

White: Alan Richardson
Black: Chris Beaumont
Hanham Open 1997
King's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♔g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♘f3 0-0 6 ♔e2 e5 7 0-0

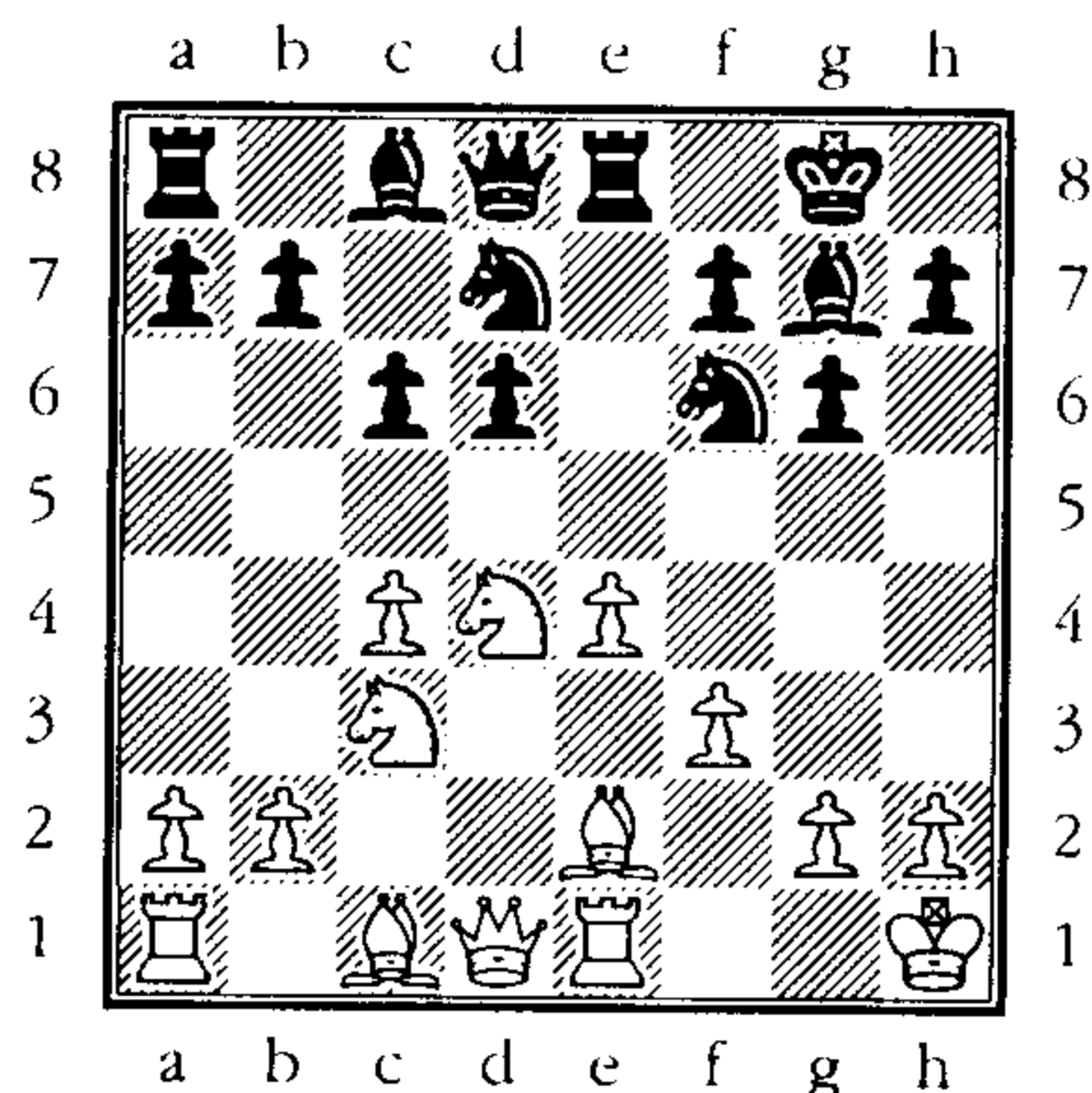


7...exd4

7...♘c6 leads to the main line of the King's Indian Defence.

8 ♘xd4 ♖e8 9 f3 c6 10 ♖h1 ♘bd7 11 ♖e1?!

11 ♔g5 is the 'normal' move. Not only does it complete White's development but 'clears' the back rank. As we shall see, the text move is inaccurate as Black's knight on f6 is no longer pinned.



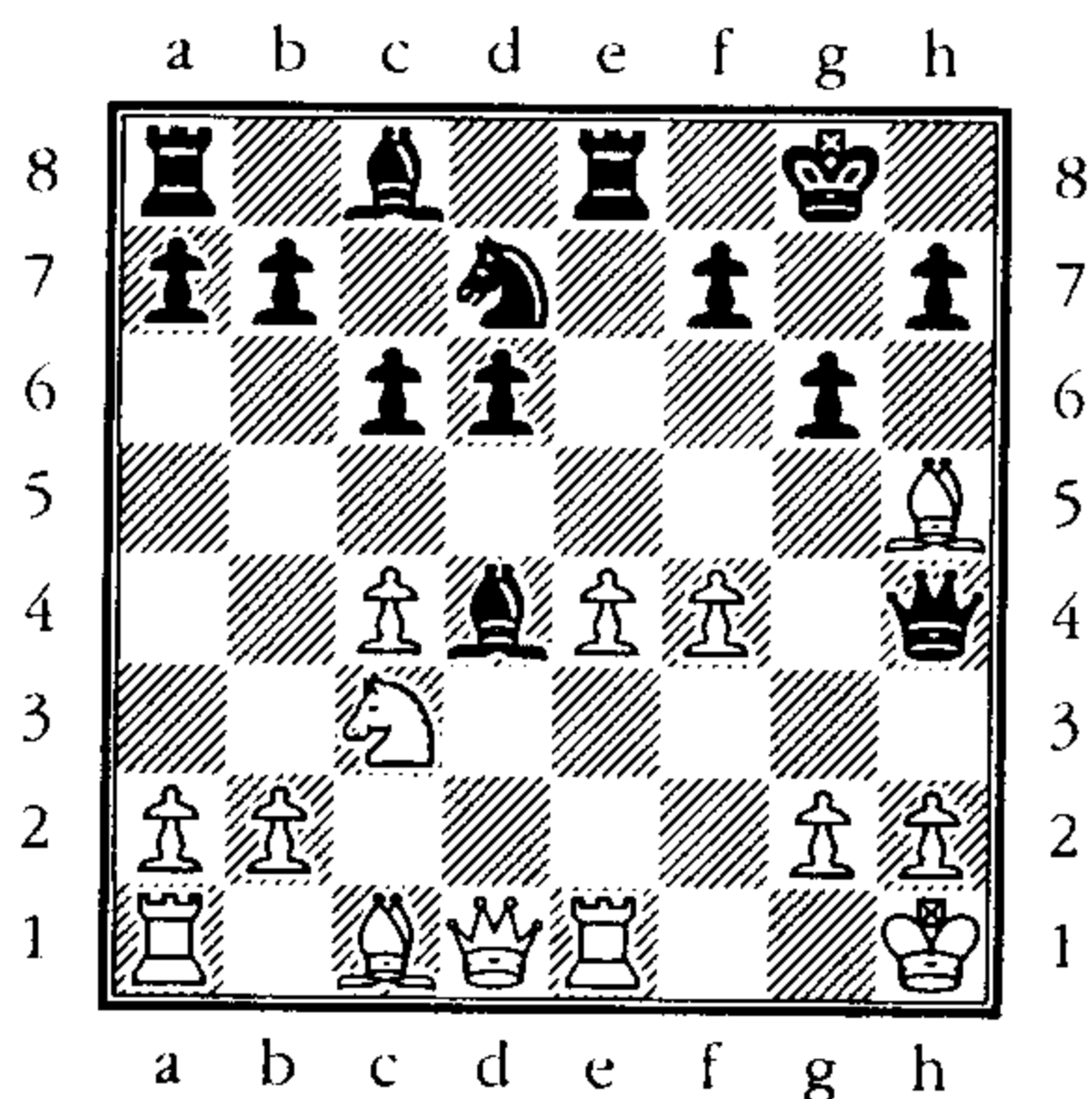
11...Qh5!

Unfortunately White may now have to 'bite the bullet' and play 12 g3 which is not only 'ugly' but potentially weakening. On the other hand, the move actually played, while desirable, has a flaw.

12 f4? Wh4 13 Qxh5

13 Qf3! Qg3+ 14 Qg1 Qxe2+ 15 Qxe2 We7 is a more solid way for White to concede the advantage of the first move.

13...Qxd4!



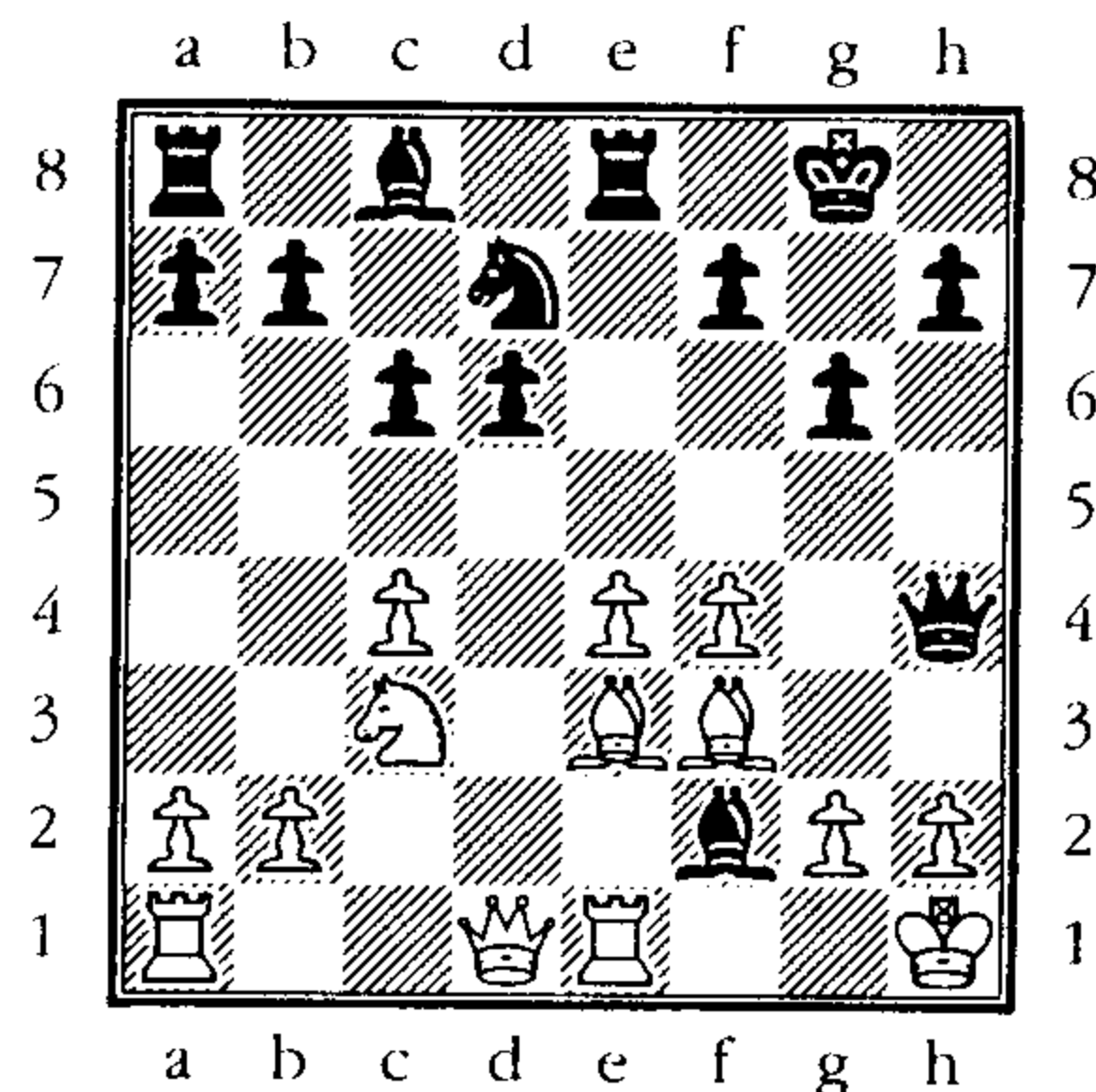
Now White has to surrender control of the central/kingside dark squares due to the fact that 14 Wxd4 would allow 14...Wxe1 mate.

14 Qf3

After 14 g3 Wf6 15 Qf3 Qb6 16 Wb3 Qe6 17 Qe2 Black has an edge as his pieces are harmoniously developed.

14...Qf2 15 Qe3

15 Qe2 Qg3 16 Wg1 Qc5 is pleasant for Black.



15...Qg3!

It is tempting to grab material with 15...Qxe1!? 16 Wxe1 Wxe1+ 17 Qxe1 Qb6 18 b3 when Black is the exchange ahead but at the cost of giving up his precious dark-squared bishop. Therefore the text is a more clear-cut way of gaining the upper hand. It is often the 'trait' of a weaker player to 'sell cheaply' his advantage whereas the stronger player will look to 'turn the screw' further before converting his advantages.

16 Qg1

No better is 16 h3 as 16...Qb6! is very awkward for White to meet.

16...Qxf4

Black could now safely win the exchange as the pawn on f4 falls as well, i.e. 16...Qxe1 17 Wxe1 Wxf4

18 Qe3 Wf6 19 Wg3 Qe5 and White has little to show for his material investment. However Black is happy to be a sound pawn ahead while continuing to maintain his positional advantage.

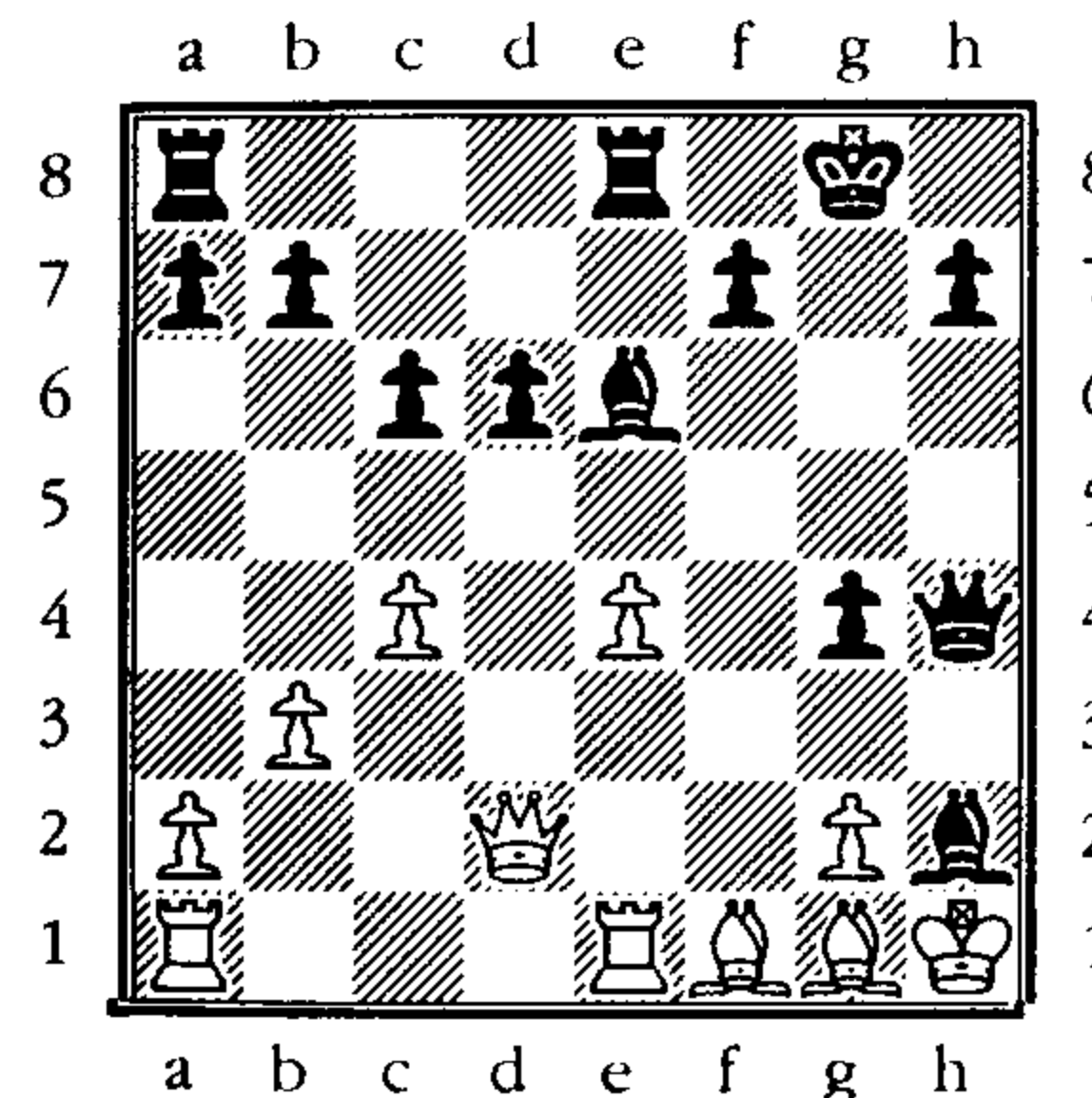
17 Qe2 Qe5 18 Wd2 Qc5 19 Qd4 Qe6 20 Qxe6 Qxe6 21 b3

White really wants to give up the exchange in return for Black's dark squared bishop.

21...g5

Here we go!

22 Qe2 g4 23 Qf1 Qxh2! 0-1



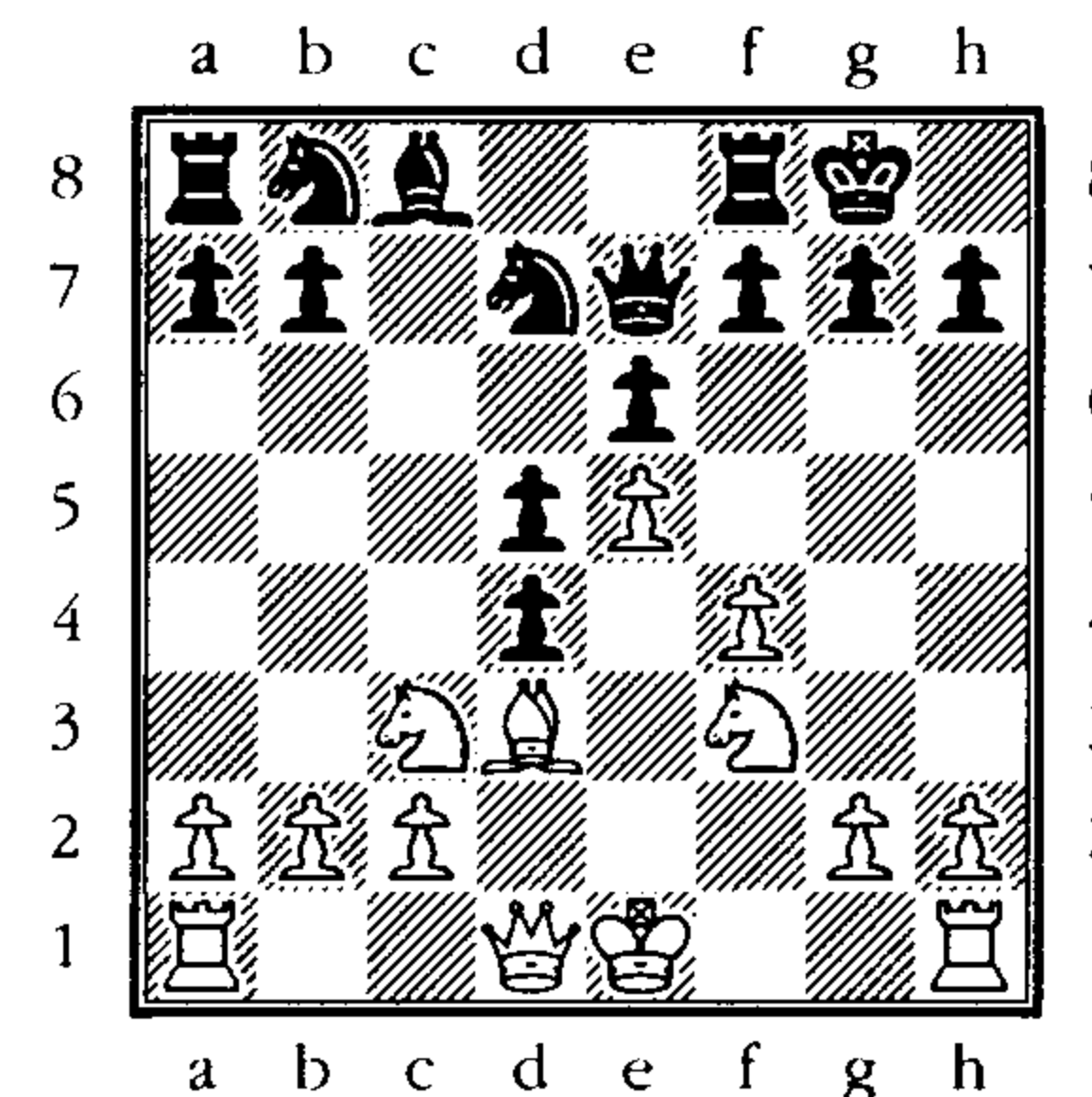
White has suffered enough. The next game is a good example of how the weaker player should play—he should aim to mix it up and randomise the position. True, the stronger player is still likely to judge things better but will not be able to cruise smoothly to victory and may end up 'shooting himself in the foot'.

White: David Pye
Black: David Gunter
Frome Open 1998
French Defence

1 d4 Qf6 2 Qc3 e6 3 e4

Transposing into the French Defence.

3...d5 4 Qg5 Qe7 5 e5 Qfd7 6 Qxe7 Wxe7 7 f4 0-0 8 Qf3 c5 9 Qd3 cxd4?

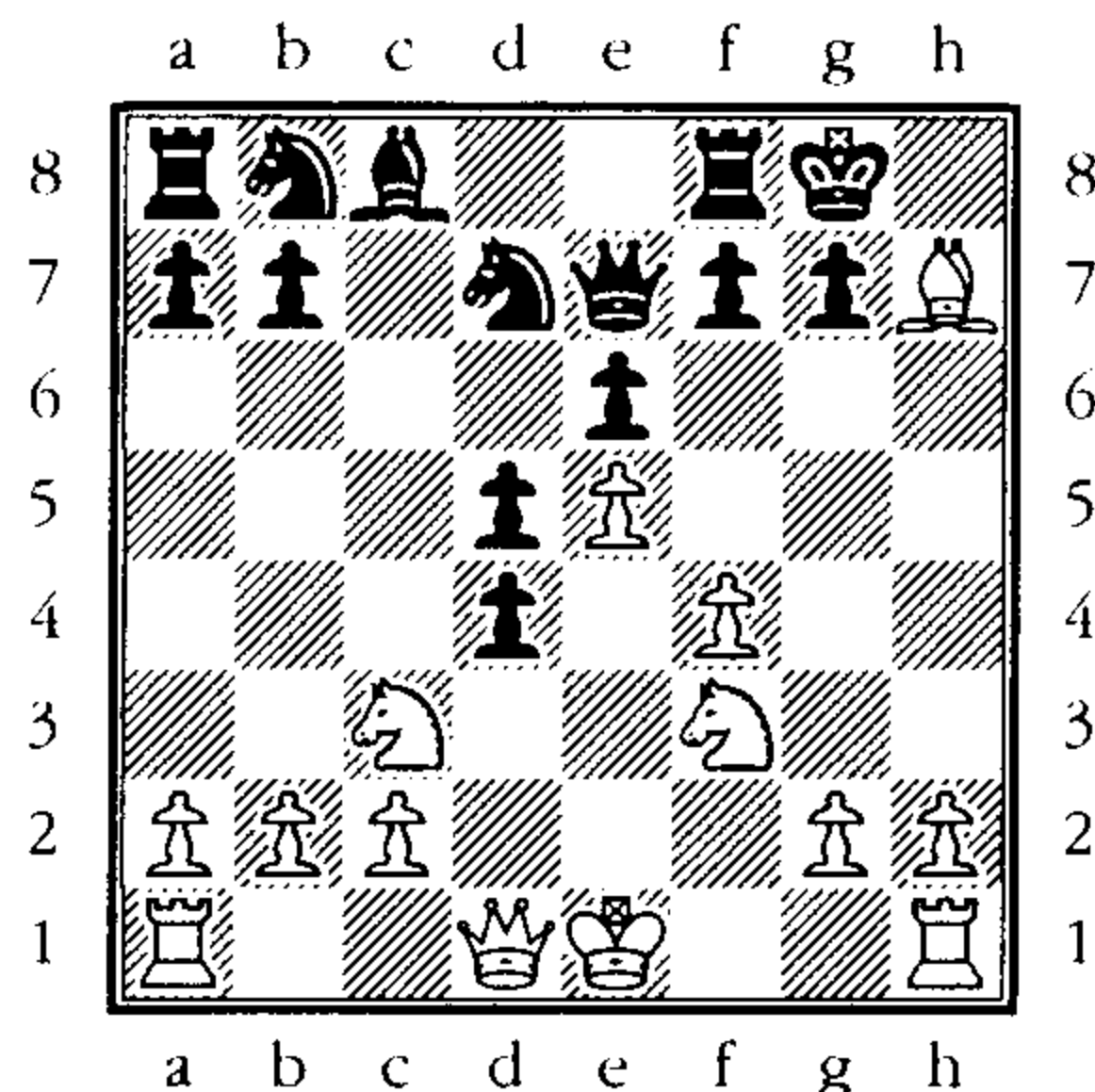


The text move is not clearly bad but offers White just the kind of opportunity he should be looking for to make Black 'break into a sweat'. 9...f6 is 'normal' and best, whereas the move played has bad tactical implications.

10 Qxh7+!

Nor is this convincing but it is the right thing for White to try. In reality Black's last move deserves a ?! annotation and White's last a !?. However the reason I have punctuated the moves in the way I have is that, in looking to achieve their respective objectives to steer the position in the right direction for their own agenda, it is White who has succeeded.

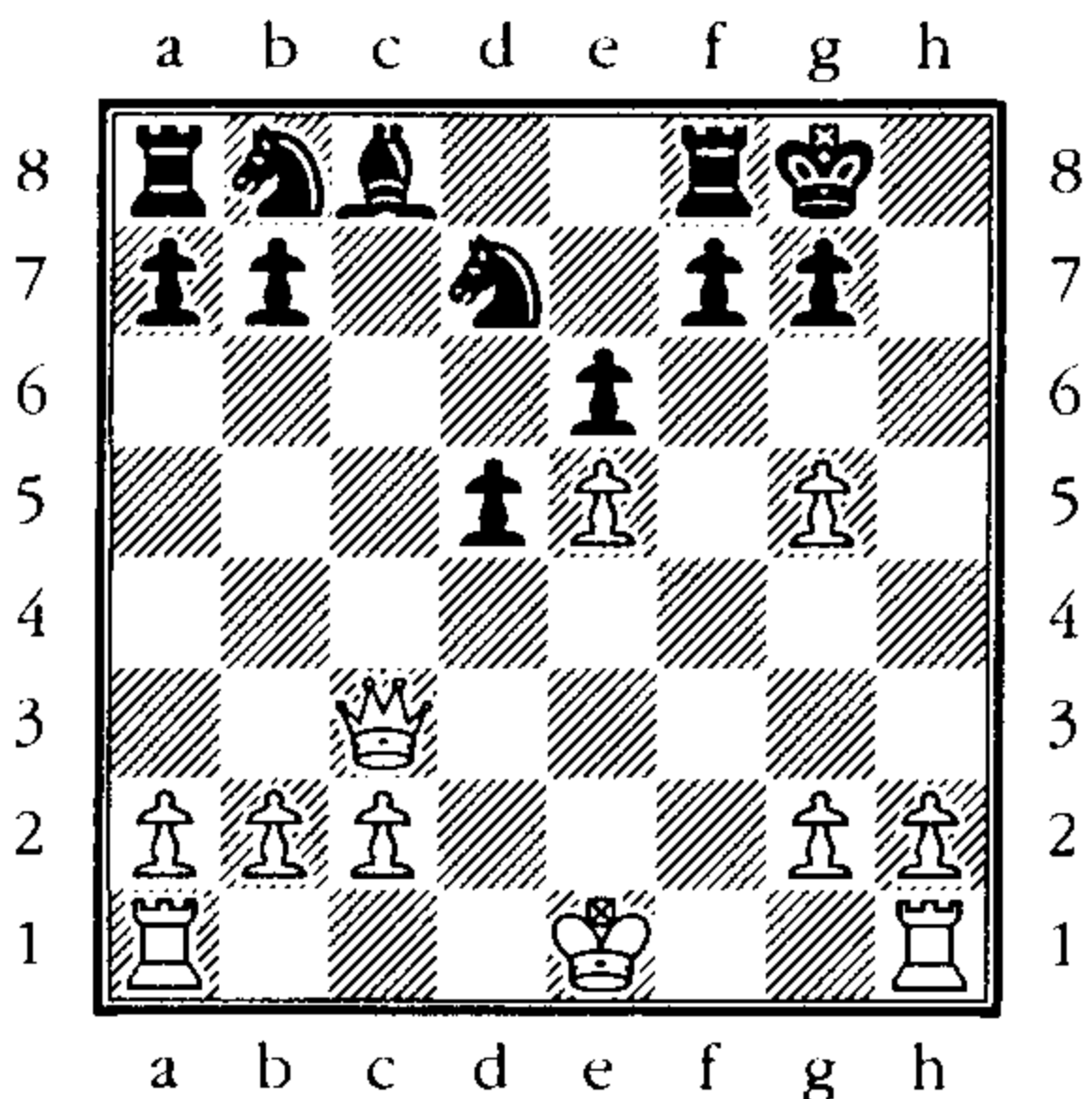
Black probably expected 10 Qxd4 when he can play 10...Qc5 (Not 10...Qxe5? 11 fxe5 Wh4+ 12 g3 as 12...Wxd4?? loses the queen to 13 Qxh7+) 11 0-0 Qc6 with a sensible position.



10...♔xh7

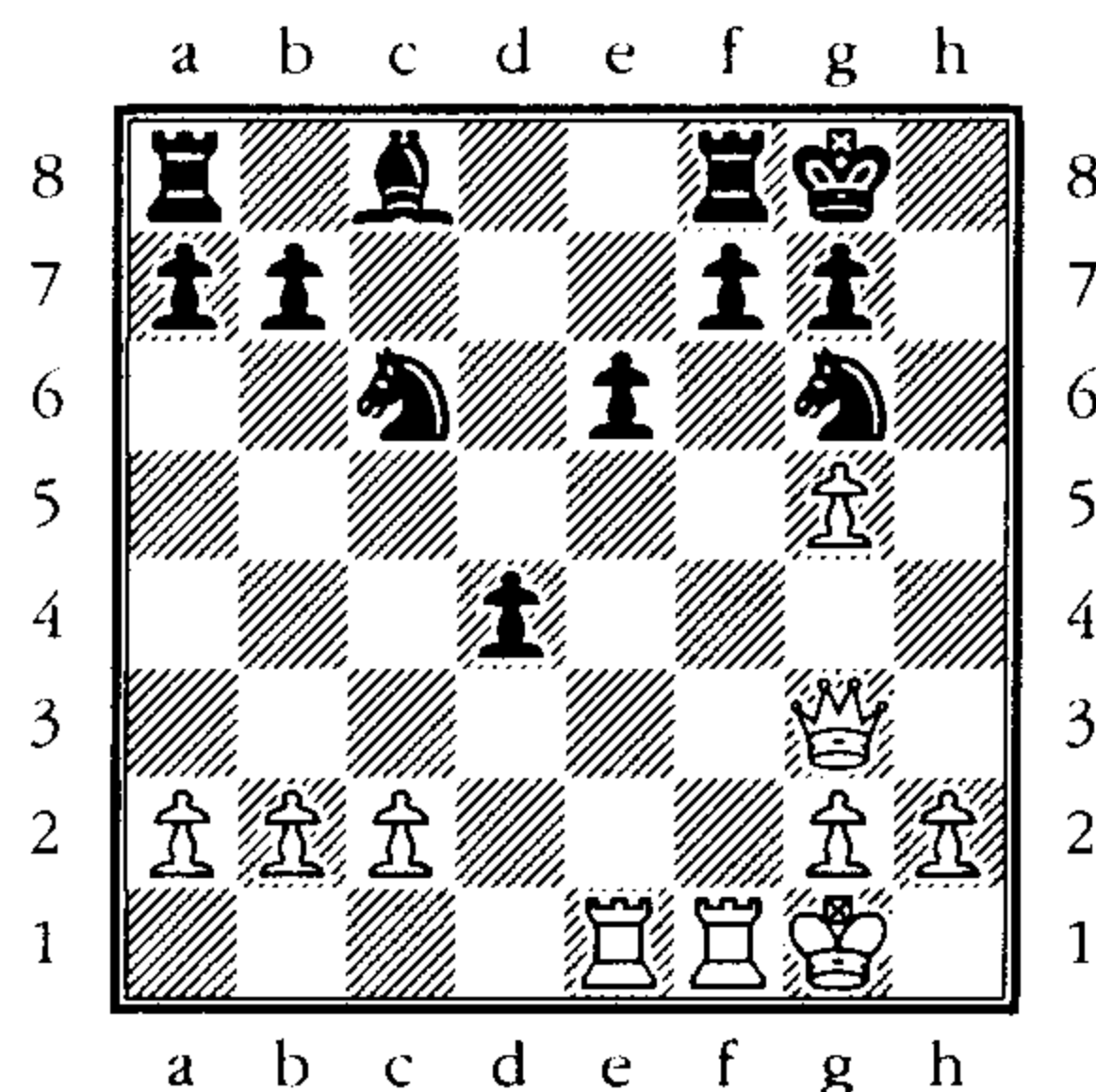
10...♔h8 has its merits as after 11 ♖g5 g6 (11...♗xe5 12 ♖h5 wins) 12 ♖xd4 ♗c6 13 ♖d2 ♔g7 14 h4 both sides have their problems. One possible continuation would be 14...f6 15 ♖d3 ♗cxe5! 16 fxe5 ♗xe5 17 ♖g3 d4 18 ♗ce4 ♗c4!? 19 ♗xe6+ ♗xe6 20 ♗xg6 ♗e3!? 21 ♗d2 ♗g4 22 ♗f2 (22 ♗f5 ♗h8!) 22...♖b4+ 23 ♗c1 ♗c4 24 ♗d3 ♖d2+ 25 ♗b1 ♗e3 26 ♗f4! and the position still has to be resolved.

11 ♗g5+ ♖xg5 12 fxc5 dxc3 13 ♖d3+ ♗g8 14 ♖xc3



White has queen and pawn for three pieces and, though his pawn on e5 is at risk, Black's light-squared bishop is not a 'happy piece'.

14...♗c6 15 0-0 ♗dxe5 16 ♖ae1 d4 17 ♖g3 ♗g6



The last few moves have been played well by both sides. Typically though, when there is a material imbalance, 'judgements' have to be made and the result of the game can hang on an idea, often missed rather than found.

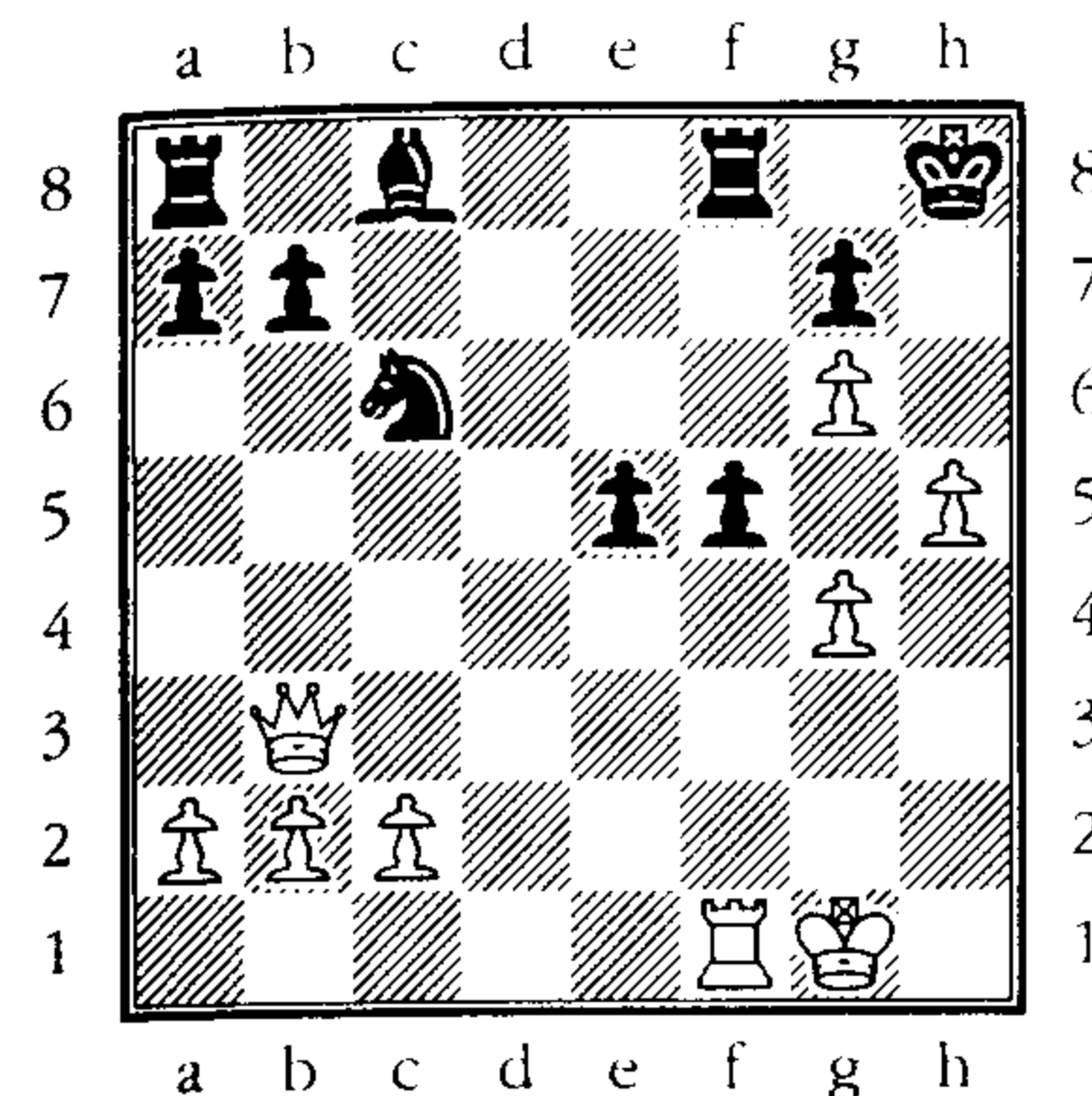
18 h4 ♗ge7 19 h5 ♗f5 20 ♖d3 ♗e3 21 ♖xe3!?

After 21 ♖f2 e5 22 c3 ♗e6 23 cxd4 exd4 24 b3 ♖ad8 Black has mobilised all of his forces.

21...dxe3 22 g6!? f5

22...fxg6! is best as it reduces White's forces, i.e. 23 ♖xf8+ ♗xf8 24 hxg6 ♗e7 25 ♖xe3 ♗f6!. Now Black has no real weaknesses and with careful play can finish his development and then co-ordinate his rook and two pieces to devastating effect. The problem with Black's last move is that it still leaves White some hope of administering a death blow to the black king.

23 ♖xe3 e5 24 ♖b3+ ♔h8 25 g4!?



Attempting to open up the black king before he can consolidate and mobilise his queenside forces.

25...f4 26 ♖h3 ♖f6

26...♗e6 is also possible as 27 h6 ♖ad8 28 hxg7+ ♗xg7 29 ♖h7+ ♗f6 30 ♖xb7 ♖d6 is nowhere near as frightening as it first looks.

27 ♖d1 ♗e6 28 ♖h4 f3

28...♗d4?! 29 ♗f2 ♗xa2 30 h6 ♖xg6 (30...♖e8?? 31 hxg7+ ♗xg7 32 ♖h7+ ♗f8 33 g7+ ♗e7 34 g8=♖+ wins) 31 hxg7+ ♗xg7 32 ♖e7+ ♗g8 33 ♖xe5 is far from clear.

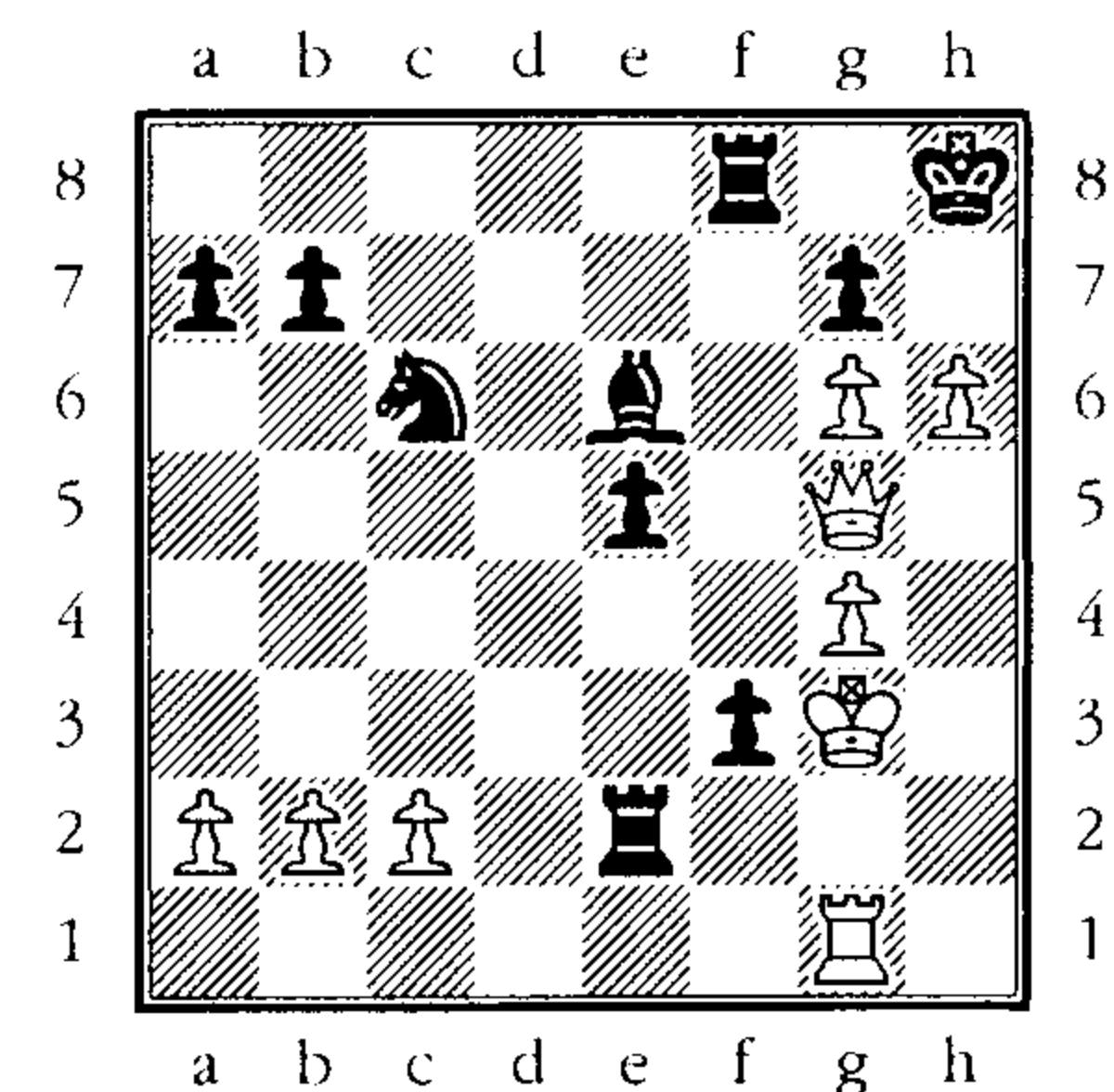
29 ♗f2 ♖af8 30 ♖g5 ♖f4! 31 ♖g1

Black should now be well on top as White's attack seems to be fading and his rook on g1 is not a good piece—moreover Black's pieces are going from strength to strength.

31...♖e4

31...♖d8! would have caused White all sorts of problems.

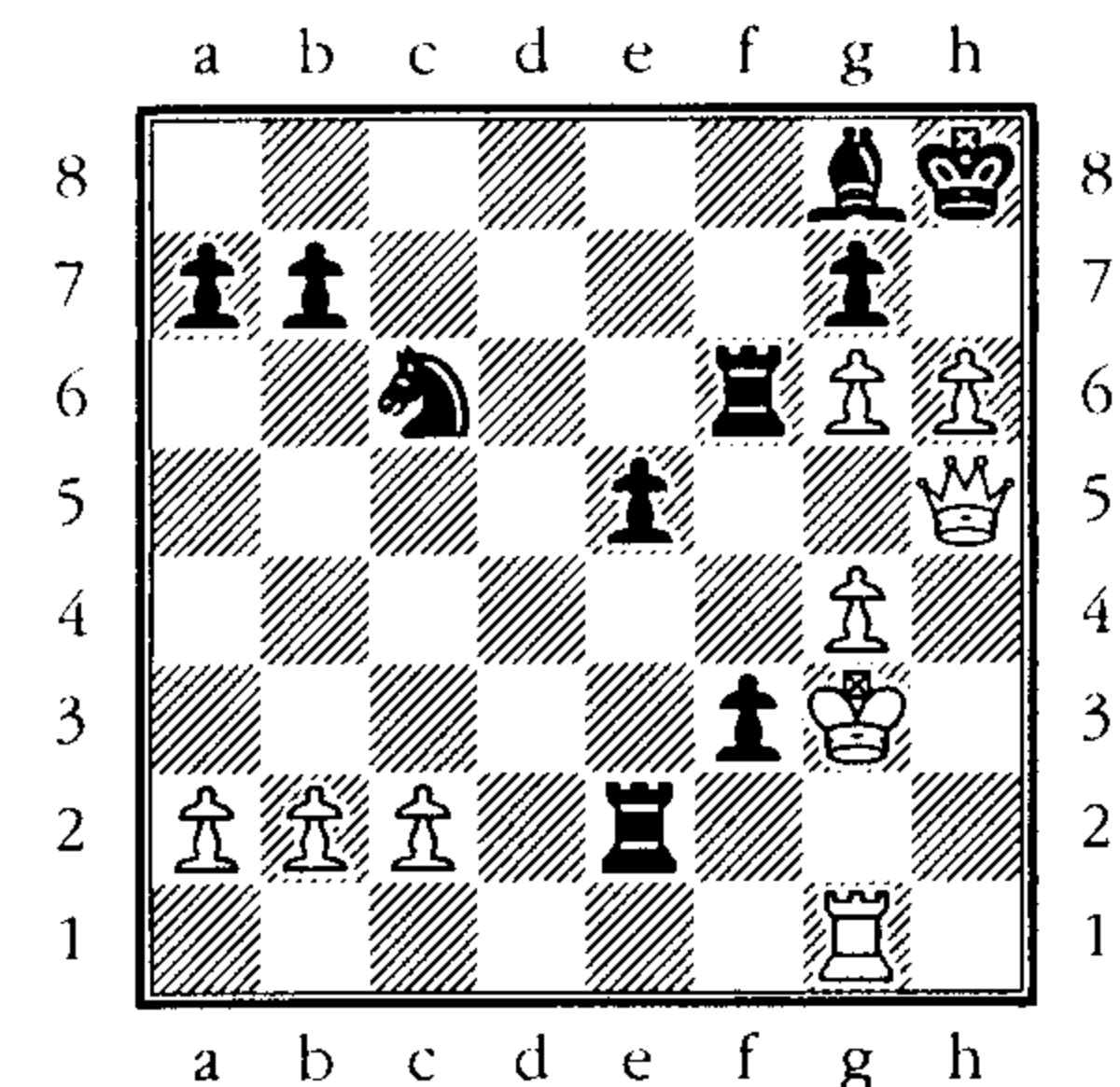
32 h6 ♖e2+ 33 ♗g3



33...♖f6?

Giving White too much counterplay whereas 33...♖f4! leaves White without resource, e.g. 34 ♗h3 (34 ♖h5 ♖xg4+ 35 ♗xf3 ♗d4 mate) 34...♖g2! 35 ♖xg2 fxg2 36 ♗xg2 ♖xg4+.

34 ♖h5 ♗g8??



The constant need for Black to readjust to the practical problems takes its toll. Correct was 34...♖f4 35 hxg7+ ♗xg7 36 ♖h7+ ♗f6 when White will run out of play, i.e. 37 ♖h4+ (37 g7 ♖xg4+ 38 ♗h3 ♖xg1+ 39 ♗h4 ♖h2 mate) 37...♗xg6 38 ♖h5+ ♗g7 39 ♖g5+ ♗f7 40 ♖h5+ ♗e7 41 ♖h7+ ♗d6

42 ♖d1+ ♔c5 and the black king has successfully run away.

35 g5

Not only attacking the rook but, more importantly, initiating the threat of hxg7+ and ♖h6 mate.

35...♖f4 36 hxg7+ 1-0

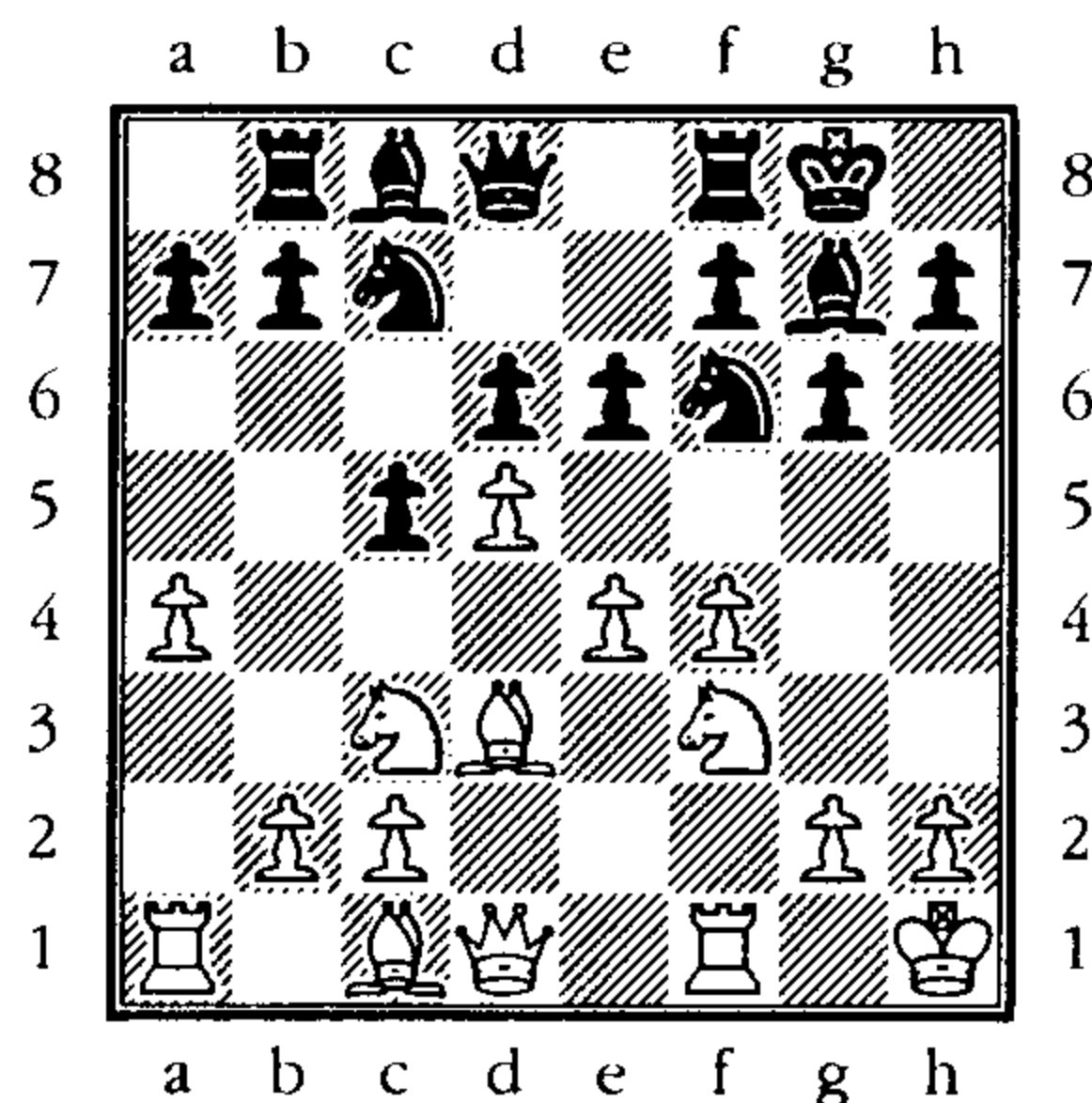
Finally in this section we will look at how strong play can punish an opponent for introducing an idea which is inconsistent with the opening line.

White: Tyson Mordue
Black: Duncan Grossett
Bristol League Open 1997
Pirc Defence

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 g6 4 f4 ♙g7 5 ♘f3 0-0 6 ♙d3 ♘a6!? 7 0-0 c5 8 d5 ♖b8 9 ♔h1 ♘c7 10 a4

It is well worth investing a tempo on this move as it slows down Black's counterplay on the queenside.

10...e6?



In this variation Black should aim for queenside expansion with the moves ...♖b8 and ...♘c7, followed

by ...b6, ...a6 and then ...b5, while White aims for a kingside attack by ♖e1-h4 and f5. Therefore the move played by Black (10...e6) is inconsistent and White punishes it to the full.

11 dxe6 fxe6

The problem with 11...♙xe6 is that White will hit the bishop with a timely f4-f5, forcing the bishop to retreat and gaining a tempo for his attack.

12 e5!

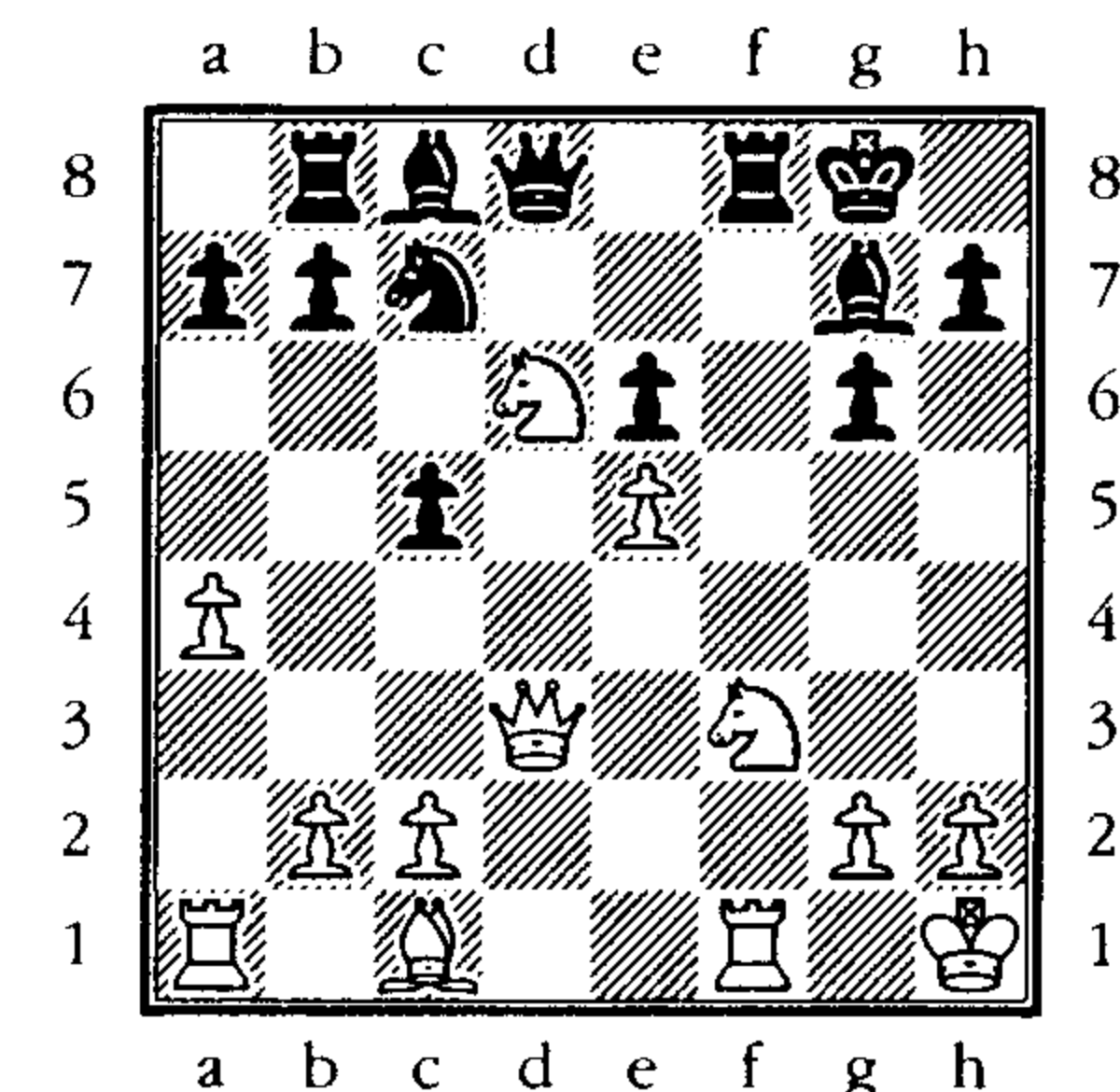
Not only potentially disrupting the black pawn structure but vacating the e4 square for his knight.

12...♘fd5 13 ♘e4

Not so convincing is 13 exd6 ♖xd6 (13...♘xc3? 14 dxc7 ♘xd1 15 cxb8=♖!) 14 ♘e4 ♖e7 15 ♘e5 ♘xf4! 16 ♙xf4 ♖xf4 17 ♖xf4 ♙xe5 18 ♖f1 ♙xb2 19 ♖b1 ♙g7 with an unclear position.

13...♘xf4 14 ♘xd6 ♘xd3 15 ♖xd3

White's knight on d6 is something of a monster.



15...b6

Alternatives are:

a) 15...♙xe5, trying to use a back rank tactic to get rid of the knight, fails to 16 ♘xe5 ♖xd6! 17 ♙h6 ♖xf1+ 18 ♖xf1 ♖e7 19 ♘xg6! hxg6 20 ♖xg6+ ♔h8 21 ♖f7 finishing things off.

b) 15...♘d5 (perhaps the best try for Black) 16 c4 ♘b4 (16...♘f4?! 17 ♖e4 g5 18 ♘xg5! ♖xg5 19 ♙xf4 leaves Black with problems) 17 ♖e4 ♖c7 18 ♙d2 and White has the better chances, e.g. 18...♙d7 19 ♙xb4! cxb4 20 ♘g5 ♖a5 21 ♖h4 h6 22 ♘gf7 ♔h7 23 ♘e4 and White's attack is decisive.

16 ♙g5

White's last piece comes into play with tempo.

16...♖d7 17 ♖e4 ♘d5

After 17...♙a6 18 ♖fd1 ♘e8! leads to interesting play i.e. 19 ♖h4! ♙e2! 20 ♘f5 ♙xd1 (20...♖f7 21 ♘e7+ ♔h8 22 ♖e1! ♙xf3 23 ♖f1 ♙xe5 24 ♖xf3 and Black's position is starting to look on the miserable side) 21 ♘e7+ ♔f7 22 ♖f4+ ♙f6 23 exf6 ♙xf3 24 ♖xf3 when White has a lot of play for the exchange.

18 ♖h4 c4?

Too ambitious. 18...♙c8 to a6 or b7 would have been more to the point.

19 ♖xc4 ♙xe5

Unfortunately this tactic will only hasten Black's demise.

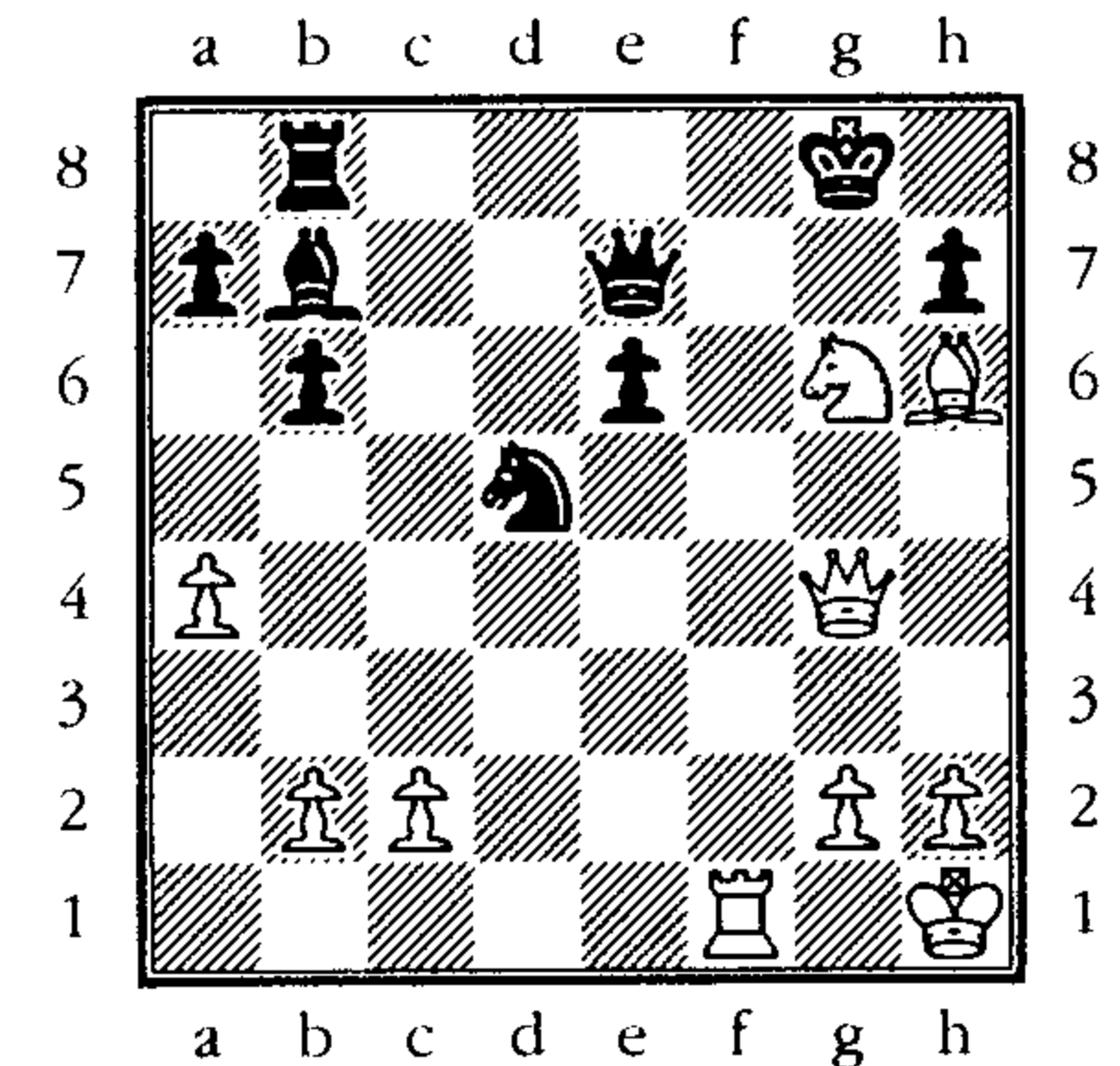
20 ♘xe5 ♖xd6 21 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8

After 21...♔xf8?? 22 ♖f1+ the queen will give mate on f7.

22 ♖f1 ♖c5 23 ♙h6 ♙b7 24 ♖g4

24 ♖f7 is also very strong, e.g. 24...♔h8 25 ♖f1 and Black is defenceless.

24...♖e7 25 ♘xg6 1-0



Black resigns rather than face 25...hxg6 26 ♖xg6+ ♔h8 27 ♖f7.

6) Being caught by move orders and transpositions

As players get more experienced (and more cunning!) they tend to adopt certain move orders, either to avoid having to face specific opening lines (variations) or in an attempt almost to trick their opponent into something they don't normally face. To put things into terms of 'black and white' (whereas in reality they tend to be more shades of grey!) I have a theory that players fall into two categories.

Firstly those who will play the same openings and defences—in other words predictable players. Their strength normally lies in the fact that they have a deep and thorough understanding of the

systems they play—even if you prepare well against them you know you are going to have a hard fight on your hands.

The second category of player is the 'spoiler'. This is the type of player who will attempt to get his opponent away from 'his book' and into unknown territory—it doesn't even matter if the spoiler is also left to his own devices in the opening as he believes that his natural talent and superior ability to play 'real chess' will prove stronger than the 'fish out of water'.

The other natural fight in chess, to use boxing terms, is between 'the big hitter' i.e. the Tal's, Fischer's and Kasparov's of this world against 'the counter punchers' such as Petrosian and Karpov. The big hitter heads for unclear complications and energy-laden positions whereas the counter punchers will aim for positional edges and control. It is debatable which of these two styles is best and can even depend on who is the 'man of the moment'. However the big hitter tends to be the more popular figure because he comes up with explosive chess full of 'flashy combinations' and moves that seem to come 'out of thin air'.

Now let us look at some basic transpositional ideas and move orders and the purposes behind them.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3

It looks as though—and could well be—White intends to play either a Closed Sicilian with 3 g3 etc. or a Grand Prix Attack with 3 f4. For his part, Black will probably play either 2...♘c6 or 2...g6,

according to his style. After either of these White can reply 3 ♘f3 with the idea of transposing into an Open Sicilian by 4 d4. Then the only independent line of interest is if Black plays 3...e5 but this is by no means to everyone's taste. So the question has to be asked: if this move order is so wonderful why doesn't everyone use it? In reality, with such ideas there are gains and losses and it is up to you as a player to assess the pros and cons and decide which move order is correct for you. So let us consider what are the implications of playing 2 ♘c3. Firstly, if as White you don't like playing against the Najdorf then Black will be limited to playing lines with a very early ♘c6—even worse, if Black is a rigid Najdorf player and doesn't realise this until it's too late, he can have a nasty experience as the following game shows:

*White: Chris Baker
Black: David Collier
Keynsham vs. Clifton,
Bristol League 1997/8
Sicilian Defence*

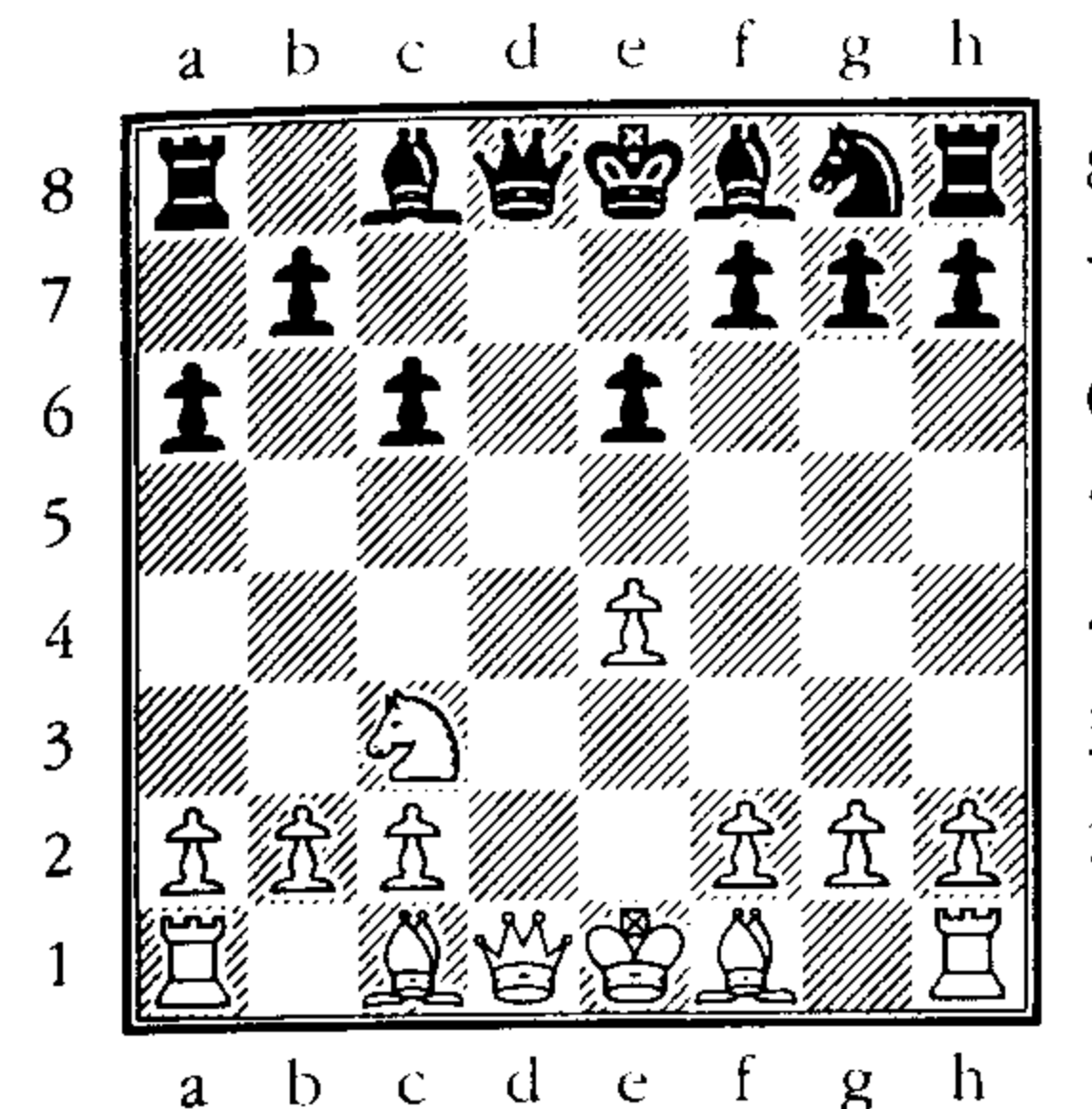
1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 ♘f3 e6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♘xd4

Of course this is now a perfectly normal Open Sicilian Defence position and Black players can choose 5...d6, 5...♘f6 or the move actually played, according to their taste—but by now a Najdorf player will probably already be 'out of his depth' and just 'treading water'.

5...a6 6 ♘xc6 dxc6?

6...bxc6 is played virtually without exception. I say 'virtually

without' because I have a recollection of Petrosian once playing 6...dxc6—but he was prepared to 'tough it out'.



7 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 8 ♘f4

White can already claim an edge, based on his lead in development, extra space and the fact that Black has dark-squared weaknesses on the h2-b8 and a5-d8 diagonals and a restricted light-squared bishop. At best Black can claim to be solid and may in the fullness of time unravel. Hardly compatible with the Najdorf variation which relies on dynamic play, activity and counterattacking chances.

8...b5

As much to stop White playing ♘c3-a4-b6 as anything else, although of course Black wants to gain some space on the queenside and perhaps develop his bishop to b7—although in the game he never gets that far.

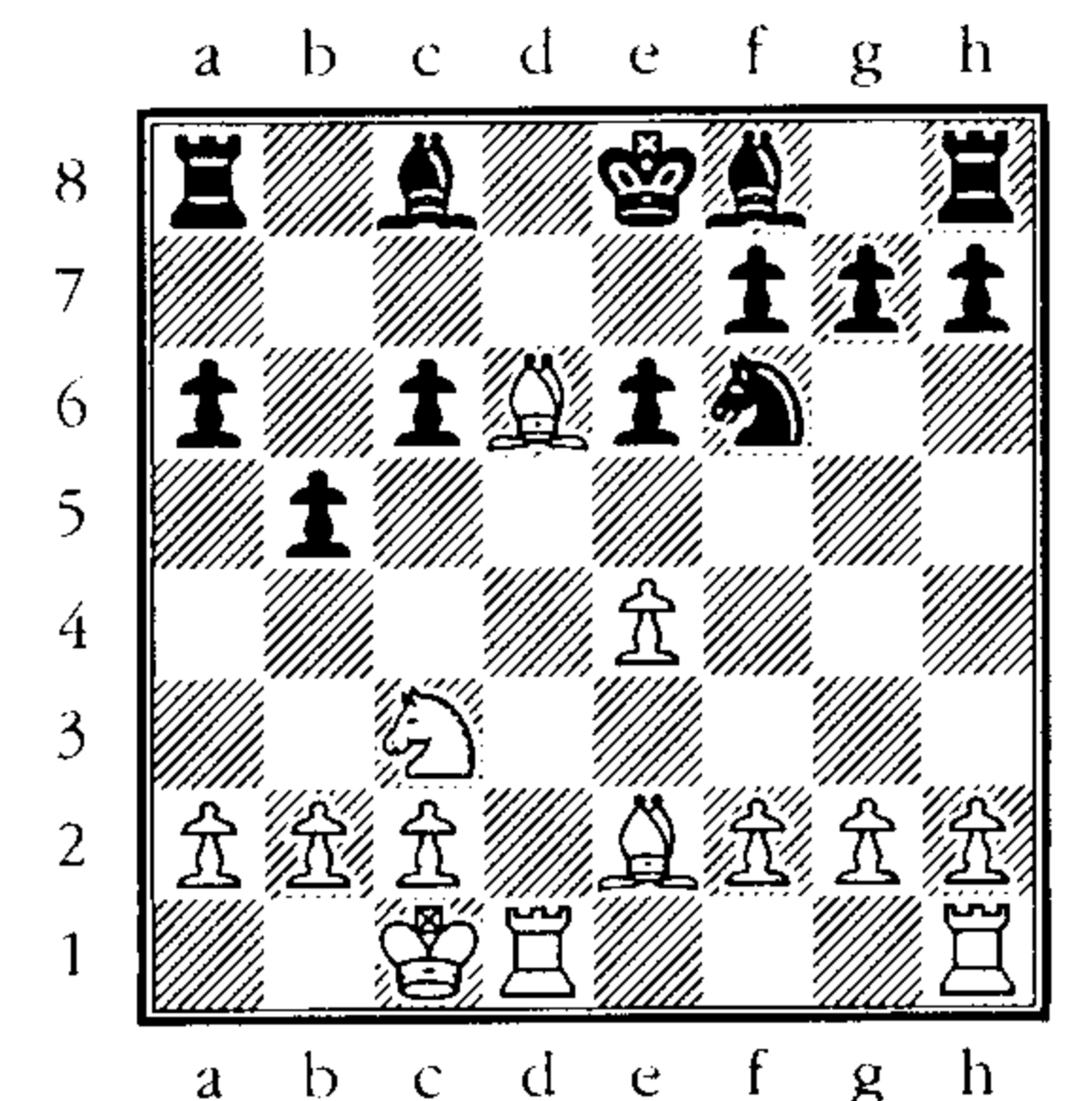
9 0-0-0+ ♔e8 10 ♘d6

Exchanging off Black's better bishop.

10...♘f6

Black could also have considered playing 10...♘xd6 11 ♖xd6 c5 but after this White still maintains the advantage.

11 ♘e2!



I was pleased with this move, not only does it complete development but also stops the black knight coming to g4. I had to calculate that I could maintain an edge if Black grabbed the pawn with either...

a) 11...b4 12 ♘xf8 ♖xf8 13 ♘a4 ♘xe4 14 ♘f3 f5 (14...♘xf2?? 15 ♘xc6+) 15 ♘c5! (a strong move based on the trick of 15...♘xc5 16 ♘xc6+ followed by 17 ♘xa8) 15...♖a7 16 ♘xe4 fxe4 17 ♘xe4 and White has a good long-term advantage due to the poor state of Black's pawn structure.

b) 11...♘xd6 12 ♖xd6 b4 13 e5 bxc3 (13...♘d7 14 ♘e4 ♘xe5 15 ♖hd1 ♔e7 16 g3!, preparing f2-f4, gives White the advantage, e.g. 16...f5 17 ♘c5 when Black is awfully tied up) 14 exf6 cxb2+ 15 ♔xb2 gxf6 16 ♖hd1 ♔e7 17 ♖xc6 when there is a lot of work to do but, with his passed pawn and better pieces, White stands better.

11...♖a7

Black decides to develop a piece instead.

12 e5

12 ♗xf8 ♜xf8 13 e5 is another good option.

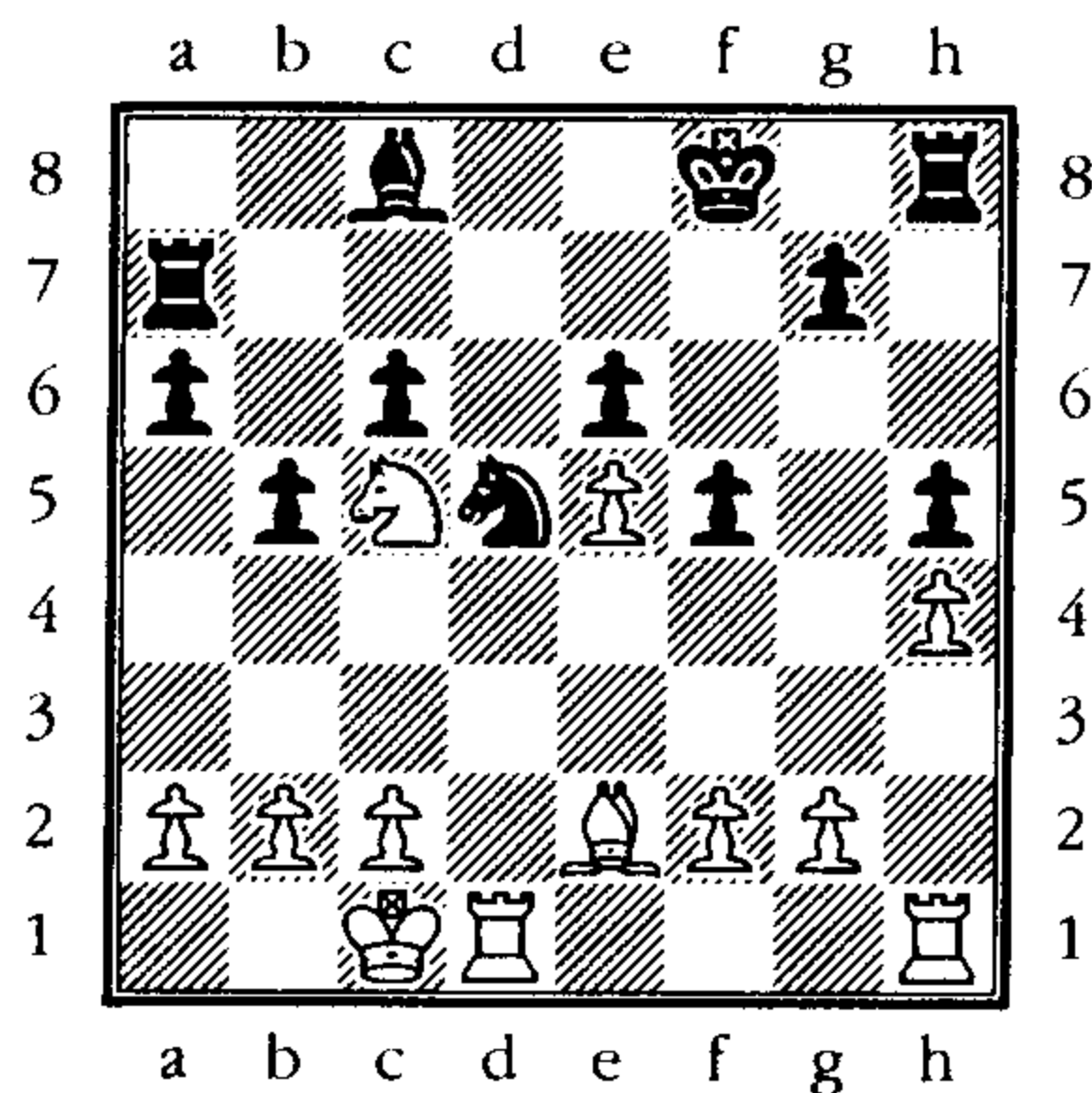
12...♘d5 13 ♘e4

Not only keeping an eye on d6 but controlling the c5 square, Black strives to gain space with...

13...h5 14 h4!

But White stops any of that and ties another black pawn down to a light square. The bishop on c8 is looking a really sad piece.

14...f5 15 ♗xf8 ♜xf8 16 ♘c5



Better than playing the knight to d6 as it restricts Black's queenside further and keeps the 'd'-file open if White should ever be able to 'kick' the black knight away from d5.

16...♜e7 17 g3 ♘b6?

Removing the only well-placed black piece from its central outpost can hardly be correct.

18 ♗d6 ♜c7 19 ♗hd1 g6 20 b3

With the rooks doubled on the open file, White wants to ensure that he can play c2-c4 if Black returns his knight to the d5 square.

20...♘d5 21 ♜b2

Stopping...♘d5-c3.

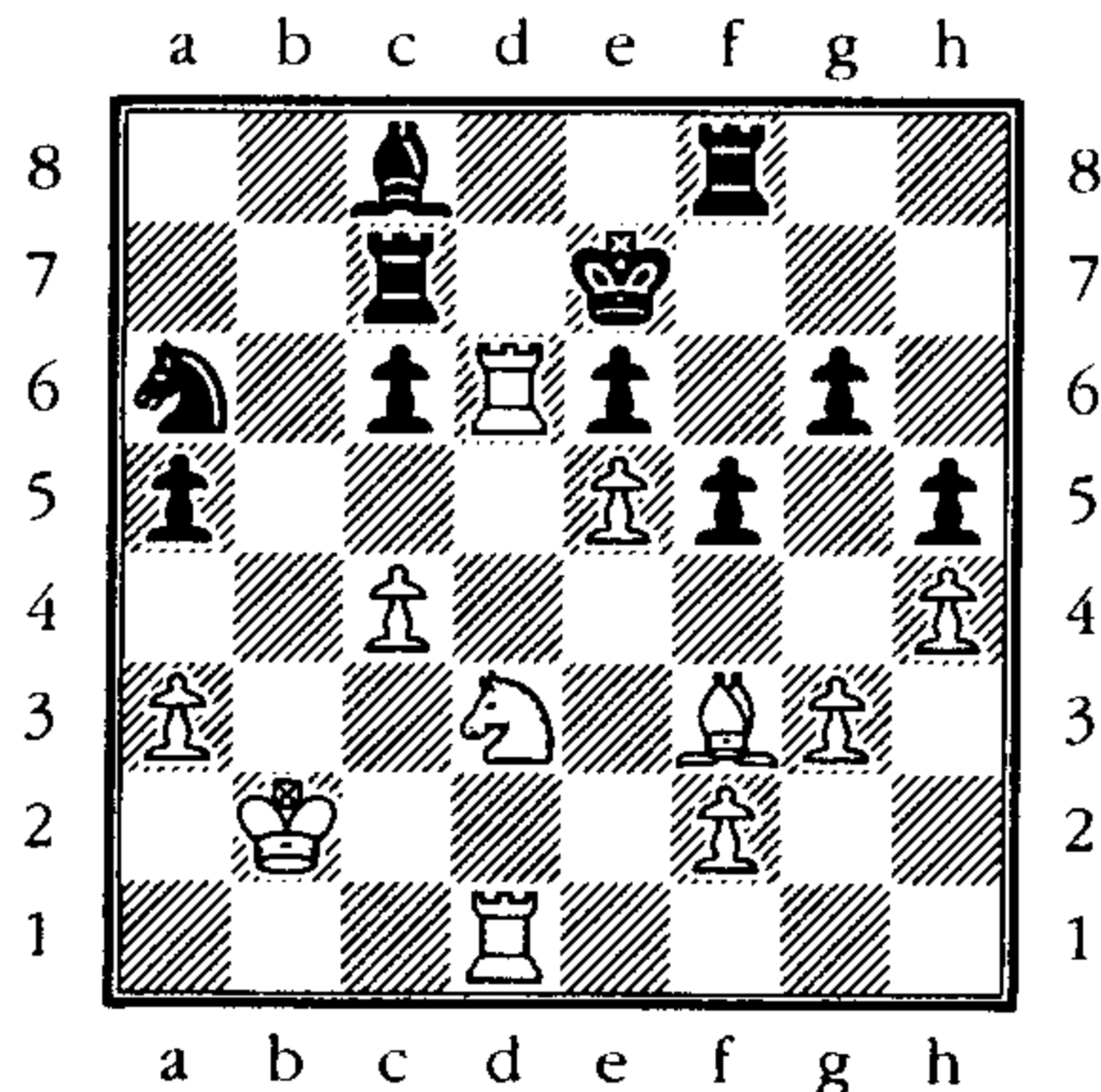
21...a5

21...b4 22 ♗xa6 is very strong for White, e.g. 22...♗xa6 23 ♘xa6 ♗a7 24 ♗xc6 ♗ha8 25 ♗xd5! exd5 26 ♘xb4 and White's position is huge.

22 c4 bxc4 23 bxc4 ♘b4 24 ♗f3 ♗f8 25 a3

Pushing the knight to the rim.

25...♘a6 26 ♘d3!



I had more in mind for this knight than exchanging it for 'the weakling' on a6.

26...c5 27 ♘f4 ♜f7 28 ♗b6!

Taking control of the other open file while planning to double up on the sixth rank.

28...♗e8 29 ♗dd6 ♗ee7 30 ♗xa6 ♗xa6 31 ♗xa6

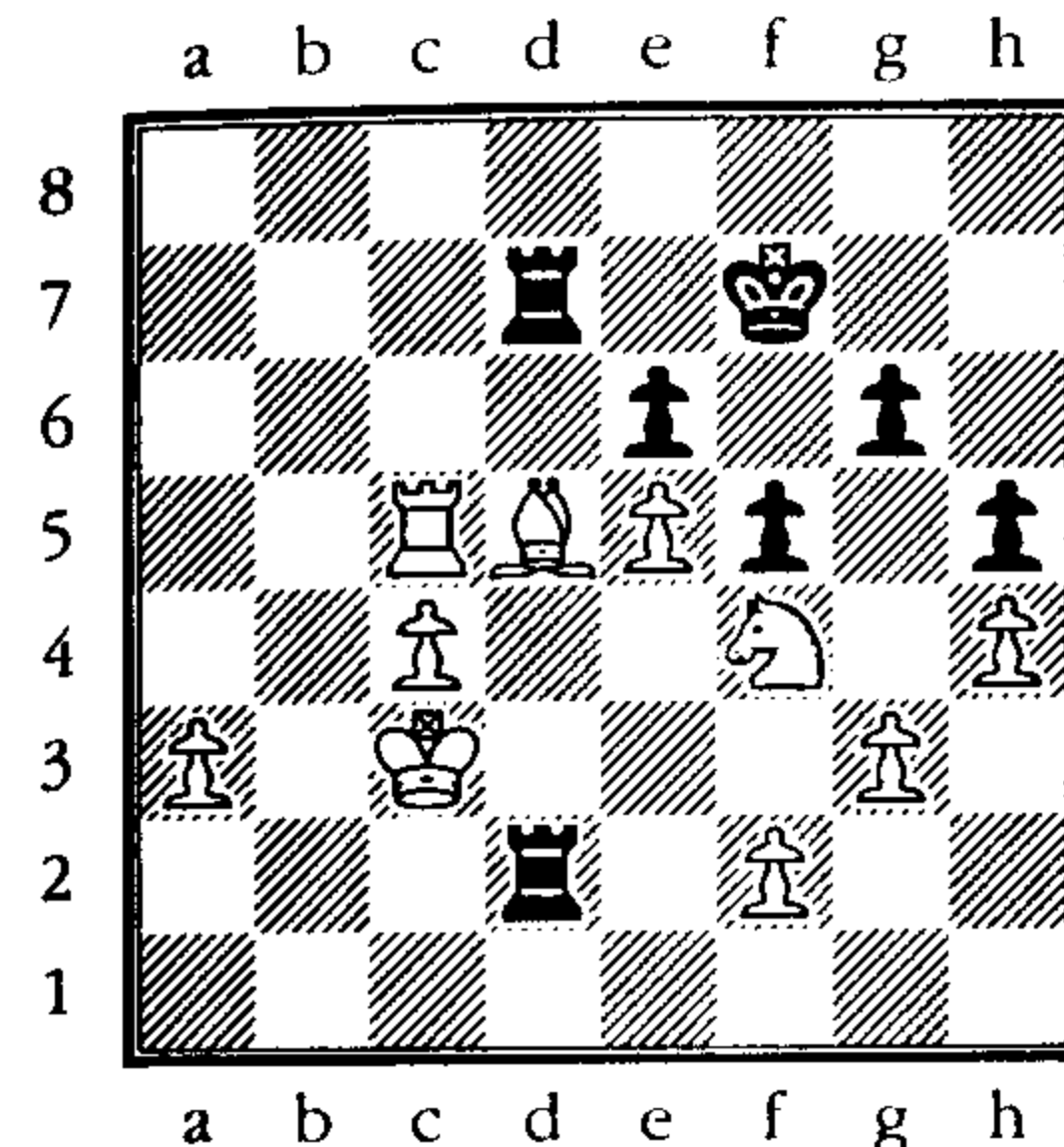
At last Black has got rid of his light-squared bishop but the price is

too high. White's minor pieces are dominating.

31...♗cd7 32 ♜c3

There is no need to rush things. I decided to stop any infiltration from Black's rook.

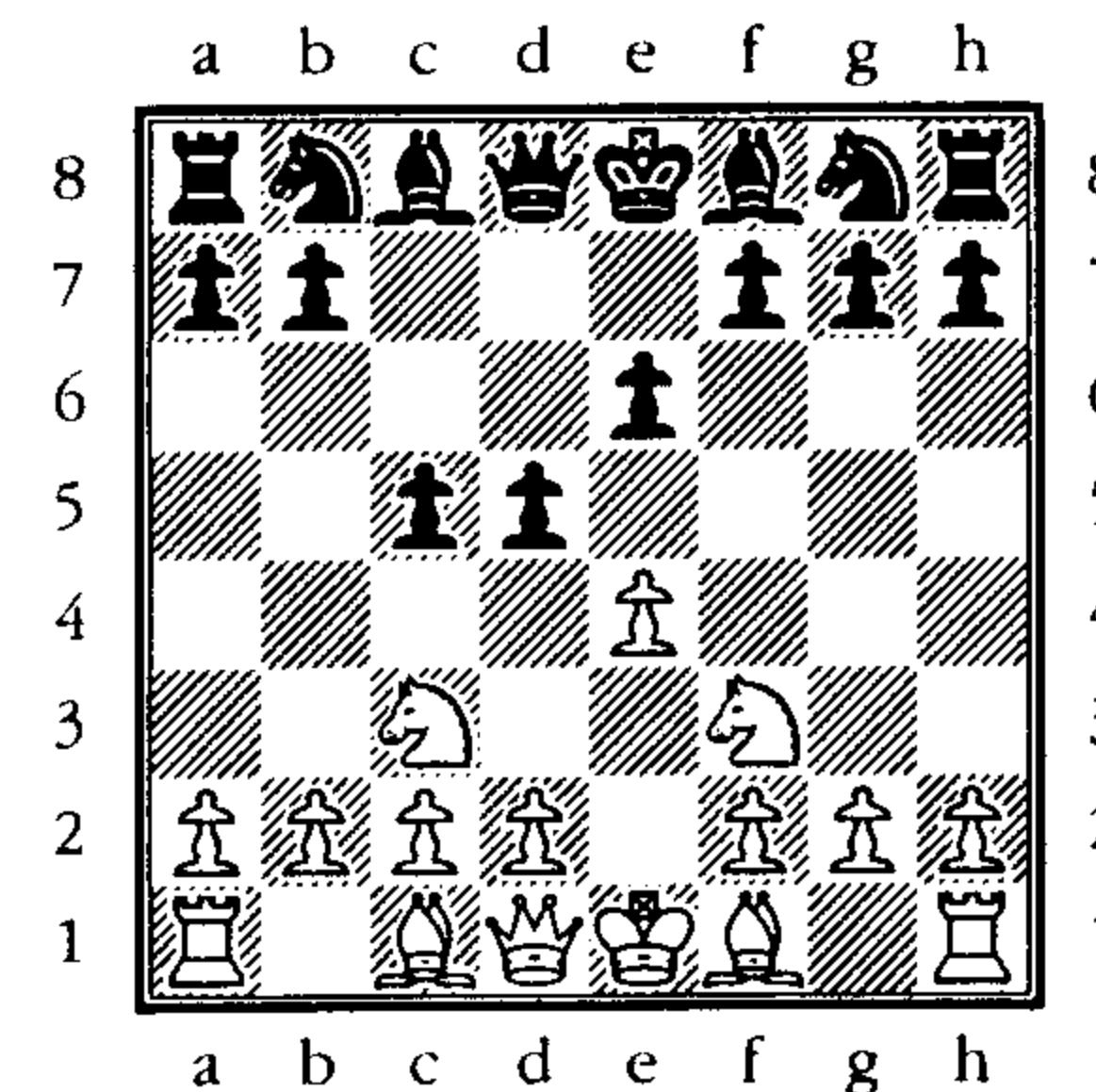
32...♗d4 33 ♗xa5 ♗ed7 34 ♗xc5 ♗d2 35 ♗d5! 1-0



Black cannot avoid further loss of material due to the threats against d2 and e6. So, having shown one of the plus sides of playing 1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3, to give a balanced perspective I should now demonstrate one of the downsides, namely if you like to play the Maroczy Bind against the Accelerated Dragon, i.e. 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 g6 3 c4, (instead of 3 d4) then you will have a problem after 1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 g6 if you are not prepared to play 3 g3 or 3 f4.

Let me pass on to you the reader, another simple but little known move order idea. If you play 3 ♘c3 against the French Defence—but actually, given a straight choice, prefer to play the White side of an Open Sicilian—then why not play 1 e4 e6 2 ♘c3. It is well documented that I like to play the Two Knight's Variation against the French and

would intend to meet 2...d5 with 3 ♘f3—but you can play 3 d4 transposing back to a 3 ♘c3 French. So what have you gained? The sole purpose of 2 ♘c3 is that if Black opts for 2...c5 (the only really worthwhile alternative to 2...d5) you can play 3 ♘f3 and Black has little choice but to play a Sicilian Defence as 3...d5 leads to disaster...



4 exd5 5 ♗b5+

White can also play 5 d4! with an edge—compare this with the move order 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 c5? 4 exd5 5 ♘f3. I prefer to go for rapid piece development.

5...♘c6

5...♗d7 and 5...♘d7 allow 6 ♗e2+ followed by 7 ♘xd5 winning a pawn.

6 ♗e2+

After which Black soon gets in a tangle, for example...

6...♗e7 7 0-0 ♘f6 8 ♗e1 ♗g4

If 8...h6 then 9 ♘e5 ♗e6 10 ♘g6! is very strong.

9 d3

Black will find it difficult to castle due to White's tactical possibility of

♙b5xc6 and ♖e2xe7, while 9...♙xf3 10 ♖xf3 0-0 11 ♙xc6 bxc6 12 ♙f4 gives White the advantage.

Another of my preferences is to play 3 ♘d2 after the moves 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5. 99% of the time the game will transpose into a main line Caro-Kann after 3...dxe4 4 ♘xe4 but, if Black chooses to play a Pseudo Caro/Modern Defence with 3...g6, (often reached from the move order 1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♙g7 3 ♘c3 c6 4 ♘f3 d5 when White's knight is committed to the c3 square) according to theory Black has more problems when White has his knight on d2 rather than c3 as he can support his centre with c2-c3. Although Black can again transpose to lines with ...d5xe4 ♘c3/d2xe4, in my opinion these variations are not as difficult to meet as those where Black maintains the central tension by not exchanging. I will finish this section by leaving you with a few more move order/transpositional possibilities:

1 d4 e6

Black may well intend to meet 2 c4 with either 2...d5 or more likely

2...f5, (transposing to a Dutch Defence) thereby avoiding 1 d4 f5 2 ♙g5 (or 2 e4) lines. In playing 1...e6 he also indicates a possible preference for playing against a 1 e4 opening by offering a transposition to a French Defence (1 d4 e6 2 e4 d5).

1 d4 g6

Black probably has nothing better than to transpose into a King's Indian Defence if White 'carries on as normal' with 2 c4, 3 ♘c3 and 4 e4 although there are a number of independent lines he can try. His real intention though, as with 1 d4 e6, is to offer White the choice of transposing to a 1 e4 opening (1 e4 g6 2 d4) by playing 1 d4 g6 2 e4, entering a Modern/Pirc Defence.

There are, as in other aspects in chess, many more opportunities for transpositions or move orders in order to avoid—or enter—particular variations. The one piece of advice I would give, should your opponent offer you an option of this type, is to ask yourself what your adversary is aiming for. Then you can come to an informed decision as to whether or not to be 'lured' into his den.

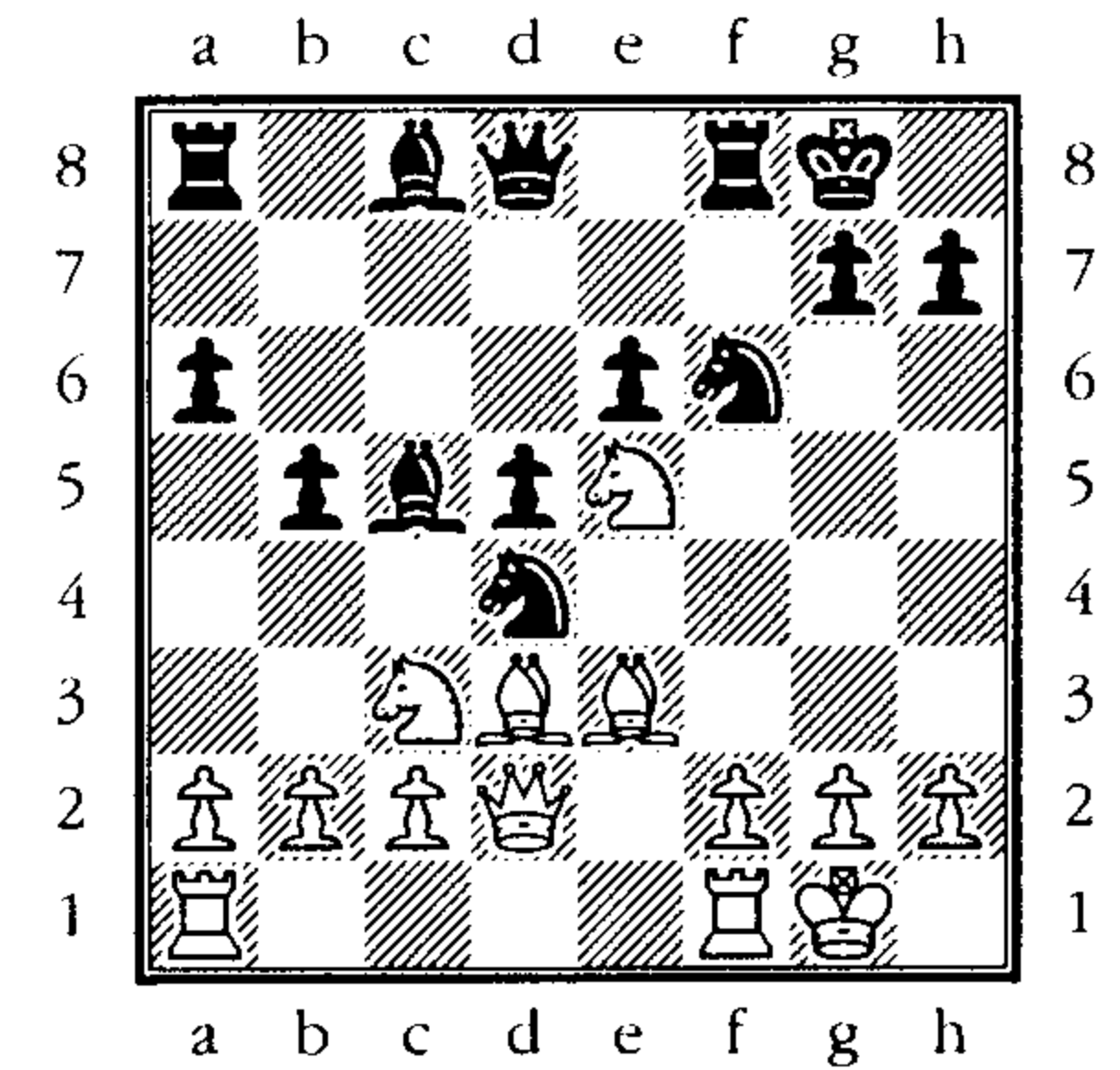
Part Two: Middlegame

Introduction

Having come out of (or survived!) the opening you must avoid 'chucking it all away' by faulty thinking, miscalculation, not taking your chances or failing to have the courage of your convictions. All in all quite a tall order! In this part of the book we will look at how players have 'done the business' or, on the other hand, have 'gone astray'. We will try to learn from their errors so that we can avoid making them ourselves. At times when we play through our own games, especially our losses, it is *apparently* simple to see where we went wrong. However, before you write off a mistake as just a tactical oversight, be sure that's what it really was—the disease or was it perhaps a symptom of the disease? You should look at the position prior to the oversight and ask yourself whether or not you were really happy with the state of play. If you are honest then at least in some cases you will find the answer is no, you were not happy. Then try to root out the real cause of the defect in your position and correct it. Let me show you an example:

The following position arose in a game played in an Elo tournament in Cardiff 1998.

White: Chris Baker
Black: Alan Spice.



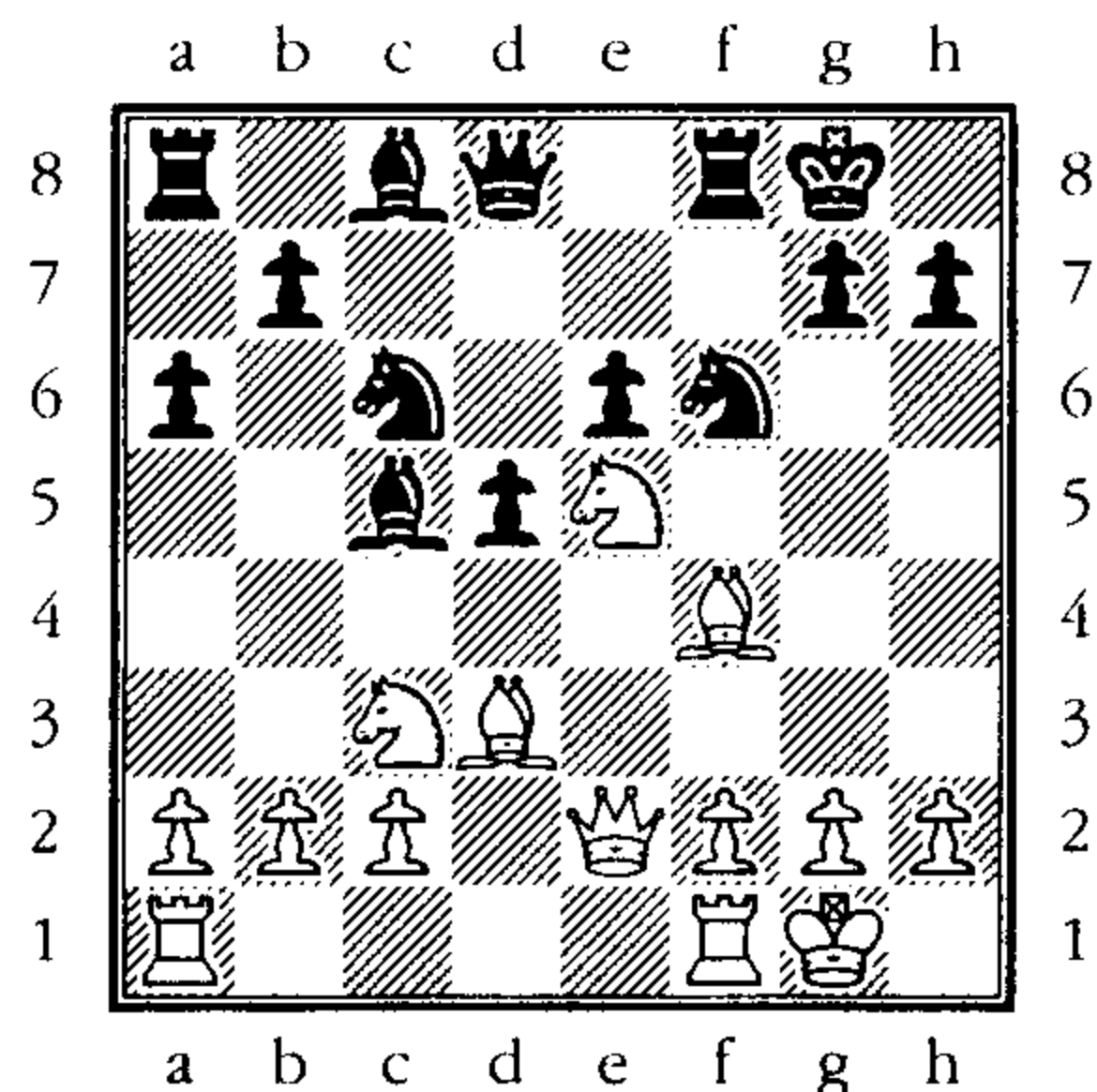
White has just played 14 ♙f4-e3 and there followed 14...♖b6 15 b4! when White must win a piece due to the fact that after 15...♙xb4 16 ♙xd4 Black cannot recapture on d4 due to ♙d3xh7+ and ♖d2xd4. However, although 14...♖b6 was not the best move, Black's position was already distinctly inferior, e.g.

a) 14...♖c7 15 ♙xd4 ♙xd4 16 ♙xh7+ ♘xh7 17 ♖xd4;

b) 14...♘d7 15 ♘xd7 ♙xd7 16 ♙xd4 ♙xd4 17 ♙xh7+ ♖xh7 18 ♖xd4;

c) 14...b4 15 ♘a4 ♙a7 16 ♙xd4 ♙xd4 17 ♙xh7+ ♖xh7 18 ♖xd4

and in each case White is a pawn ahead with the better position. So rather than blame the tactical oversight in playing 14...♖b6 Black should retrace his steps to move 12.



White had just played 12 ♖d1-e2 and now, instead of 12...♘d4?! which was the main source of his future problems, consider options such as 12...♜e8!?, 12...♙d4 or even 12...♙d7 when White has little more than a slight opening pull.

7) Losing the 'thread' of the position

If you have never had a game where things just didn't go right, where all of the tactics in the lines you analysed worked in your opponent's favour and not yours, where your position went downhill and you didn't seem to be able to generate counterplay or even put up any real resistance—then you are either kidding yourself or you are going to be world champion very soon! If we are honest with ourselves this is what happens in real life and all too often—so what is the cause? If we can pinpoint an error, a serious positional misjudgement (tactical errors are easier to identify) then we can justify what happened. In fact a lot of these games (disasters) can be put down to something much more basic but difficult to spot unless you are aware of its existence—i.e. losing the thread of the position. In other

words, you are playing 'sensible' moves but they do not gel together to form a coherent plan. What happens then is that your position drifts until your opponent, who *has* been following a plan, brings it to a logical conclusion and puts you under such pressure that your position cannot stand the strain. The solution then—once you have reached the end of your 'book'—is to ask yourself what you should be aiming for, not necessarily in terms of moves but in terms of concepts. Should you be aiming to attack in a particular part of the board, get a piece to a certain outpost, exchange your bad bishop or even exchange off into a certain type of ending? Especially when a position has fewer chances of ending in a mating attack or real material gain, the strong player is already considering at a very early stage of the game if he wants a minor piece or a rook and pawn ending and even who the king and pawn ending favours. Now if you believe this is beyond your capabilities, I suggest that you think in terms of concepts rather than heavy move by move analysis. It will produce surprisingly good results! For instance: 'in the king and pawn ending we are materially level but I will have an outside passed pawn and my opponent cannot make progress on the other side of the board, nor can his king penetrate into my position'—notice not a single chess move!—but an awful lot has been covered in that statement. Sure, in saying that he cannot make progress on the other side of the board you may have to back it up with 'if he plays ...a7-a6 I can play a4-a5 so that my opponent cannot create a passed pawn with ...b7-b5'—but keep analysis simple and to the point.

The first game in this section is an interesting one between a strong player, known to feel uncomfortable in main line Open Sicilians, against a 'tricky' opponent who has practised the Najdorf variation for many a year. The result is that White doesn't really get any opening advantage but rapidly turns the game to his advantage once the opening phase is complete. In other words he used his judgement to retain the tension and balance in the position, after the opening, by playing 'logical chess' and then let his superior understanding of the game take over.

White: Simon Ansell
Black: David Collier
Bristol League Open 1997
Sicilian Defence

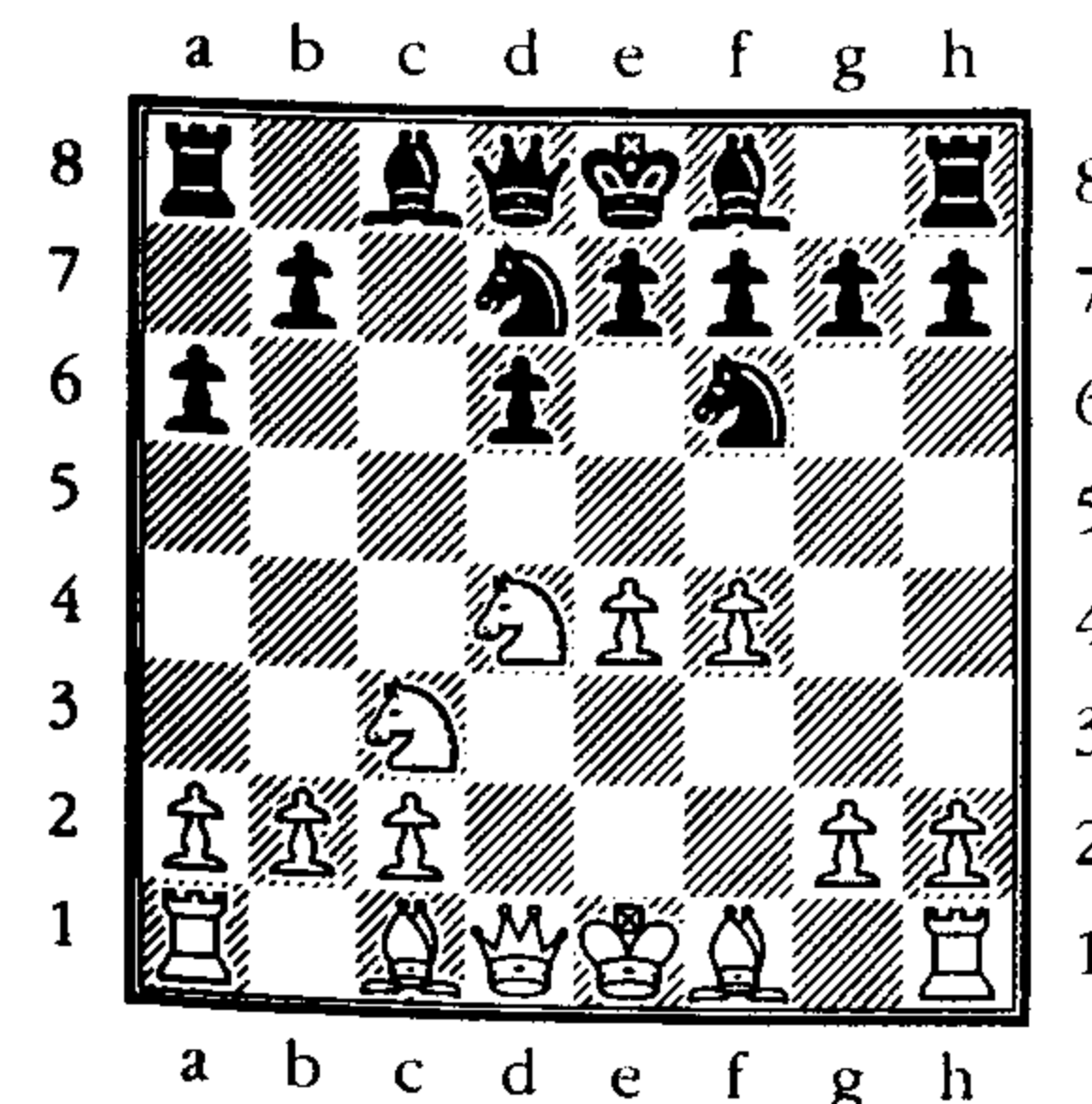
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4

So it is to be an Open Sicilian—an Open variation is one in which White exchanges his 'd'-pawn for Black's 'c'-pawn.

3...cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6

The so-called Najdorf, the original idea of which was to prepare ...e7-e5 by denying White the reply ♘d4-b5.

6 f4 ♘bd7!?

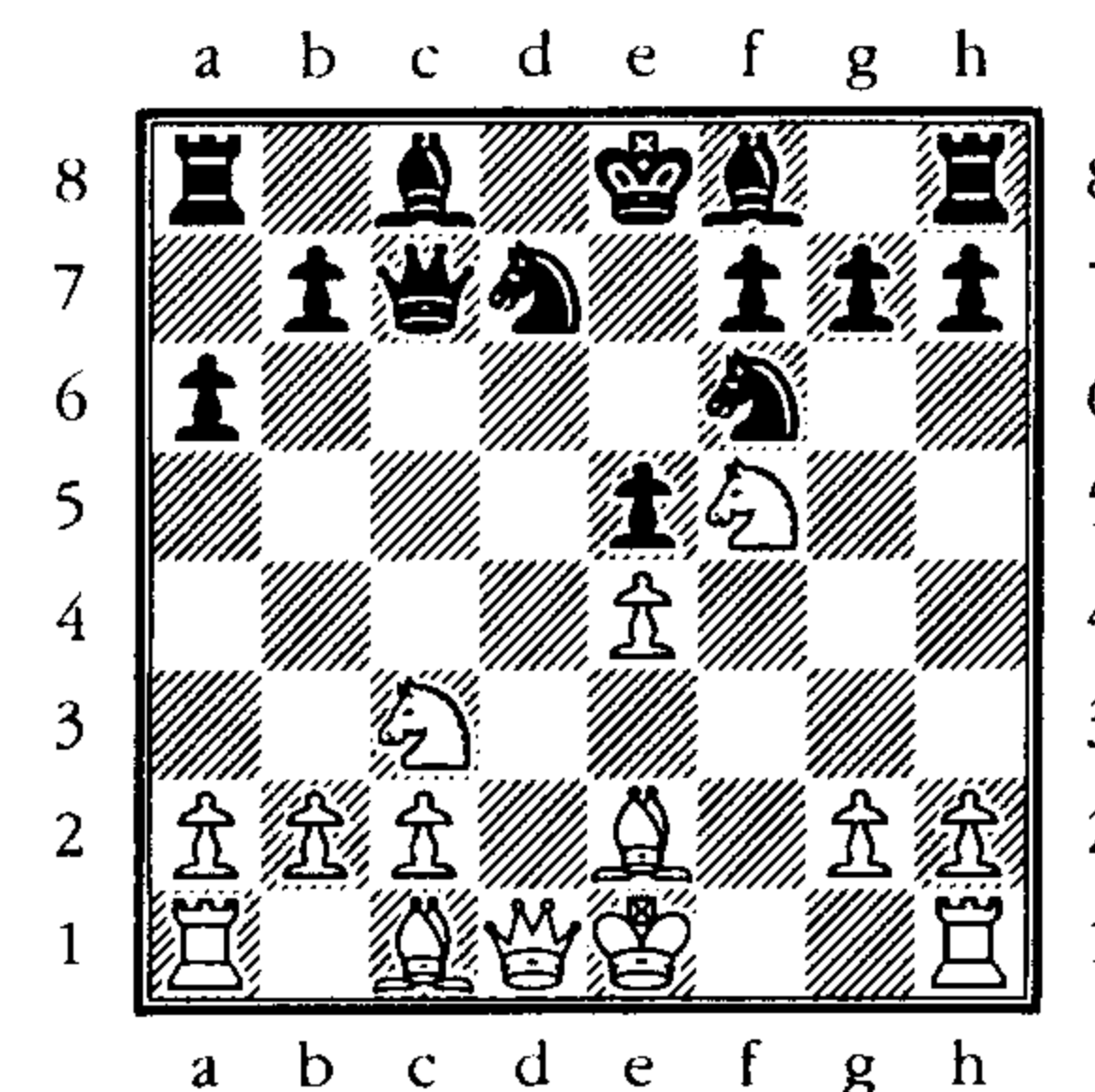


Slightly unusual. More common is 6...e6, 6...e5 or even 6...♜c7. Often Black can play 'all the same sort of moves' and transpose back to well-trodden paths.

7 ♙e2 e5

The parting of the ways. Black's main alternative is 7...g6 which leads to a totally different style of position.

8 fxe5 dxe5 9 ♘f5 ♜c7



9...♜b6 is invariably played (can I really say 'invariably' played when Black didn't play it in this game?!) as in Kasparov-Gelfand, Credit Suisse Masters, Switzerland, 1994. The major difference between this and the move played in the game is that it contests the g1-a7 diagonal while 'keeping an eye' on b2 should White attempt to play ♙c1-e3. The second point is not so obvious until later in the game—the fact that it may become a 'target' if White can play ♘c3-d5 at a favourable moment. What is imperative though, is that Black stops ♘f5-d6+ as it would be positional suicide for him to exchange off his dark-squared bishop by ...♙f8xd6, which would not only concede the bishop pair but

also his control of the central dark squares, in particular d6 and e7.

10 ♔f3?!

To me, 10 0-0 would have been the most 'obvious' continuation—in order to 'exploit' one of the 'downsides' of Black's previous move.

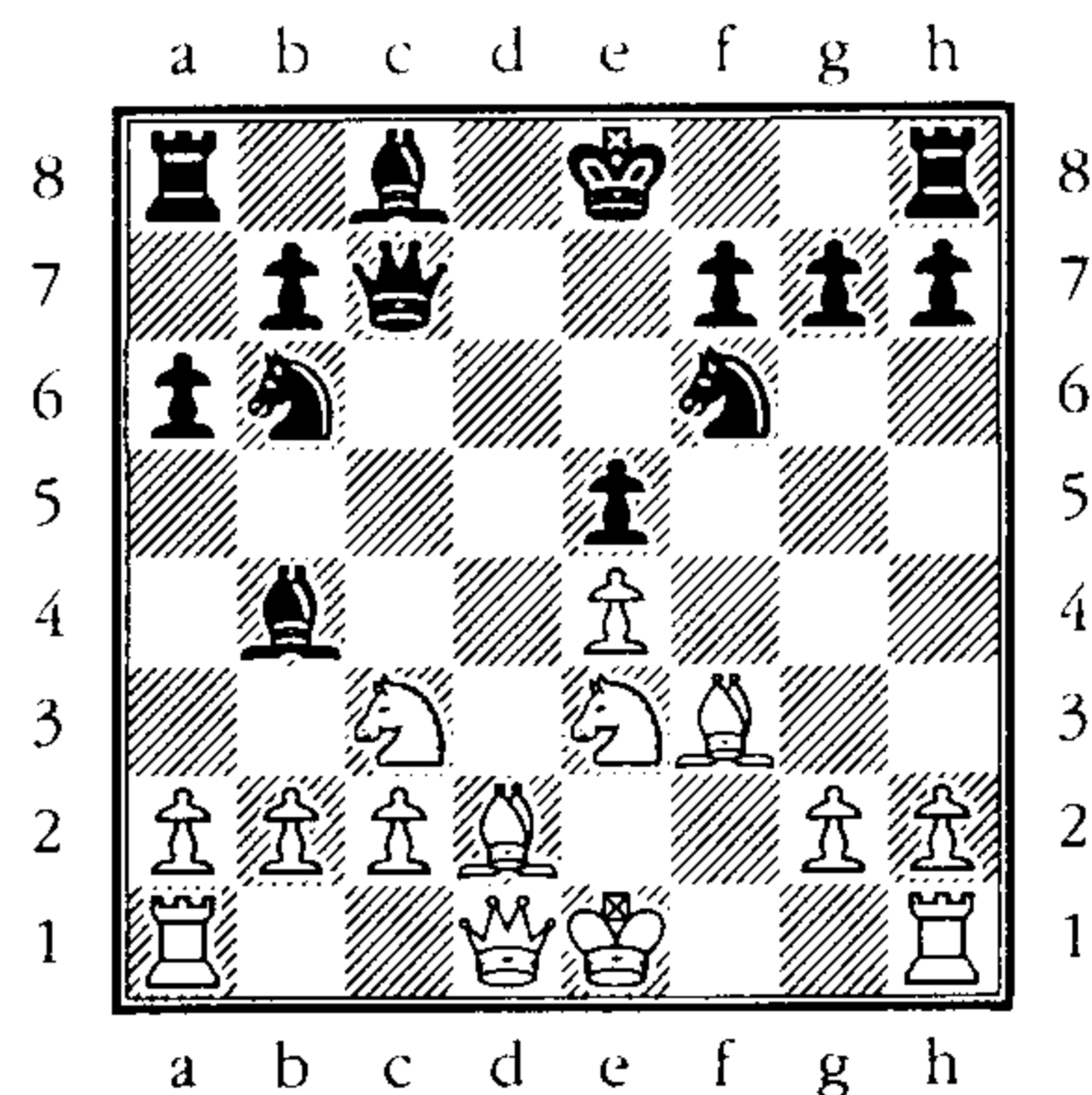
10...♘b6

Not only contesting the d5 square but also 'taking a look' at c4 whilst releasing his bishop on c8.

11 ♘e3 ♔b4?

11...♔e6 would be the alternative way to contest the d5 square, the control of which is a thematic consideration in the Najdorf. The problem with the text is that Black may not really want to exchange off his dark-squared bishop for White's knight on c3.

12 ♔d2



12...♔c4

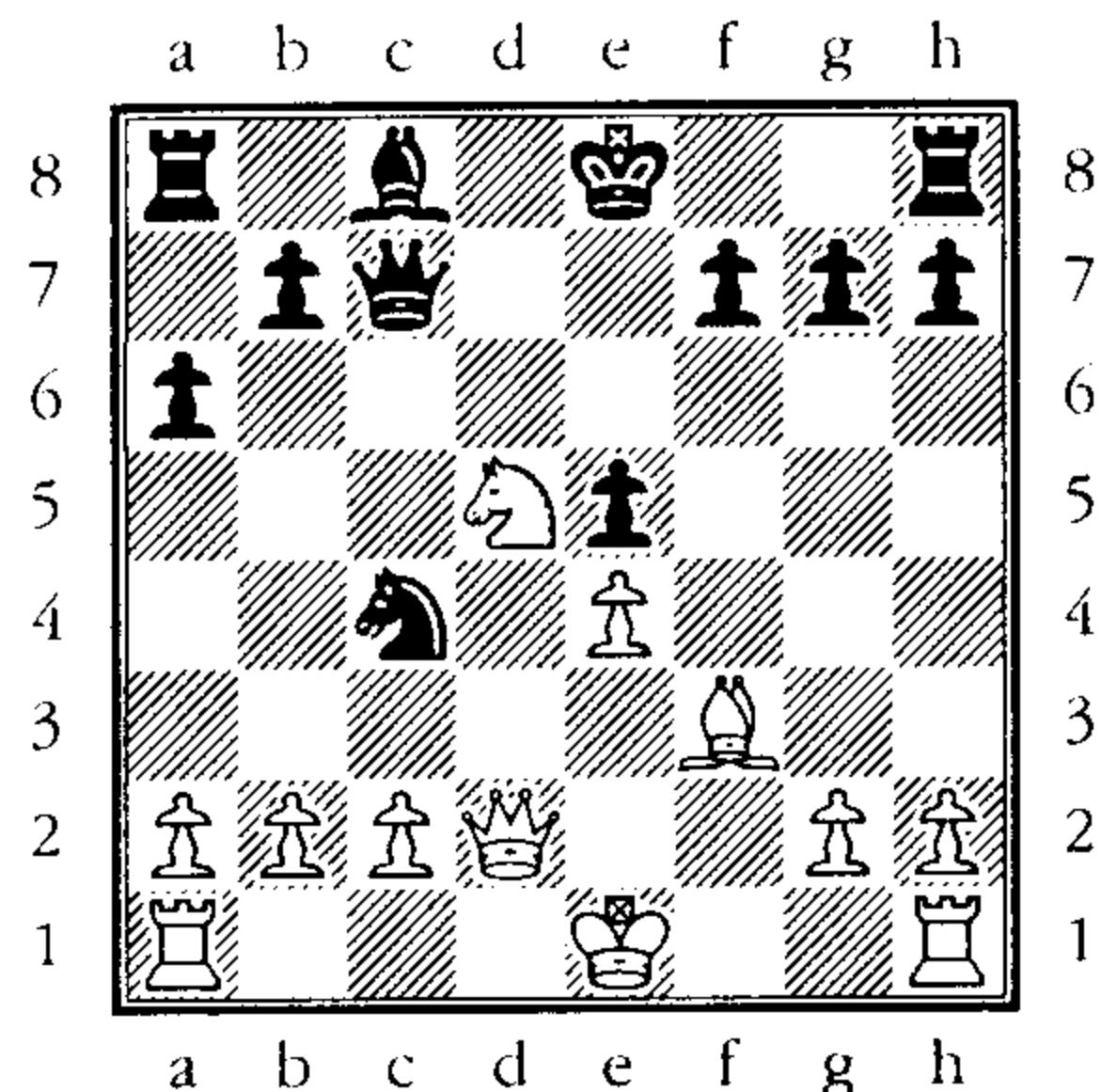
Black now realises that 12...♔xc3?! 13 ♔xc3 ♘a4 14 ♔b4!—temporarily investing a pawn to avoid conceding the bishop pair and receiving a weakness to boot!—14...♘xb2 15 ♗d6 ♗xd6 16 ♔xd6

gives White the advantage. Perhaps Black should have simply castled.

13 ♘cd5 ♘xd5

13...♔xd2+ 14 ♗xd2! is likely to transpose into the game as Black cannot afford 14...♘xd2 as the queen on c7 falls with check.

14 ♘xd5 ♔xd2+ 15 ♗xd2



15...♗c6?

The main problem with the move played is that Black concedes control of the central dark squares. 15...♗c5! is far better. I should imagine that Black was worried by the pin if White played 16 ♗c3, but after 16...♔e6 White cannot immediately win material with 17 b3 as Black has at his disposal 17...♔xd5 18 exd5 ♗e3+. However the resulting position after 19 ♗xe3 ♘xe3 20 ♔d2 ♘f5 21 ♗he1 f6 may favour White due to his mobile queenside pawn majority and lead in development. Nevertheless there is still 'fight' left in the position for Black, especially if he were able to obtain a useful outpost for his knight.

16 ♗g5! ♗c5

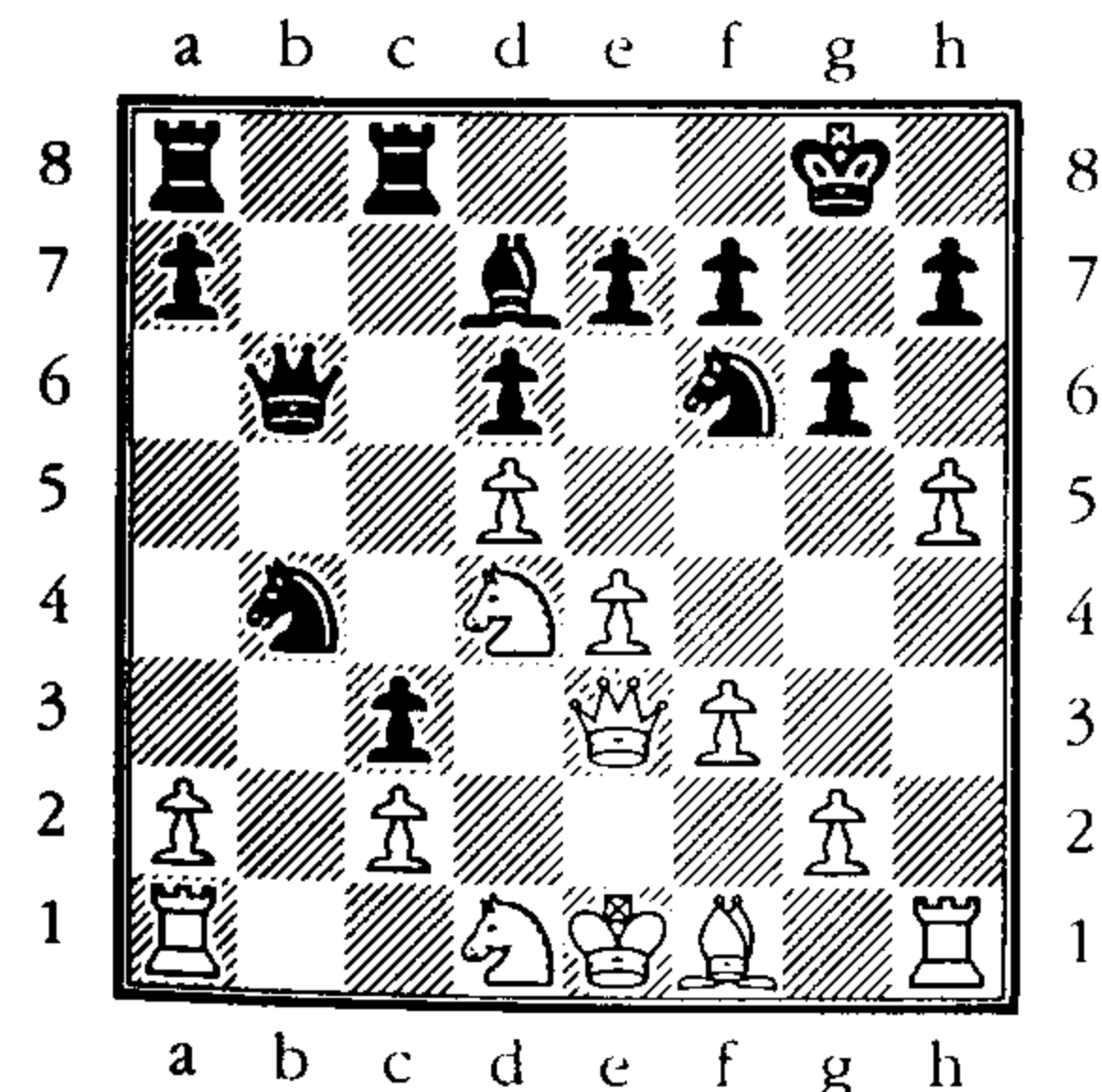
Black has to lose a tempo and concede a vital pawn.

17 ♗xg7 ♗f8 18 b3 1-0

Black cannot escape further concessions.

Sometimes we are almost 'programmed' to adopt standard set-ups and to make 'automatic' recaptures. One simple example of this would be when your opponent exchanges queens and you only have one way to recapture—which you do. But as players get stronger they will look for an 'intermezzo', usually checks or mating threats, after the capture is made. When a player becomes an expert he will look in advance of the capture for a retort that will spoil an opponent's 'simple' exchange. Here is an example of 'free thinking' by a talented young player from a well-known 'chess family'.

White: David Gunter
Black: Simon Buckley
Frome Open 1998



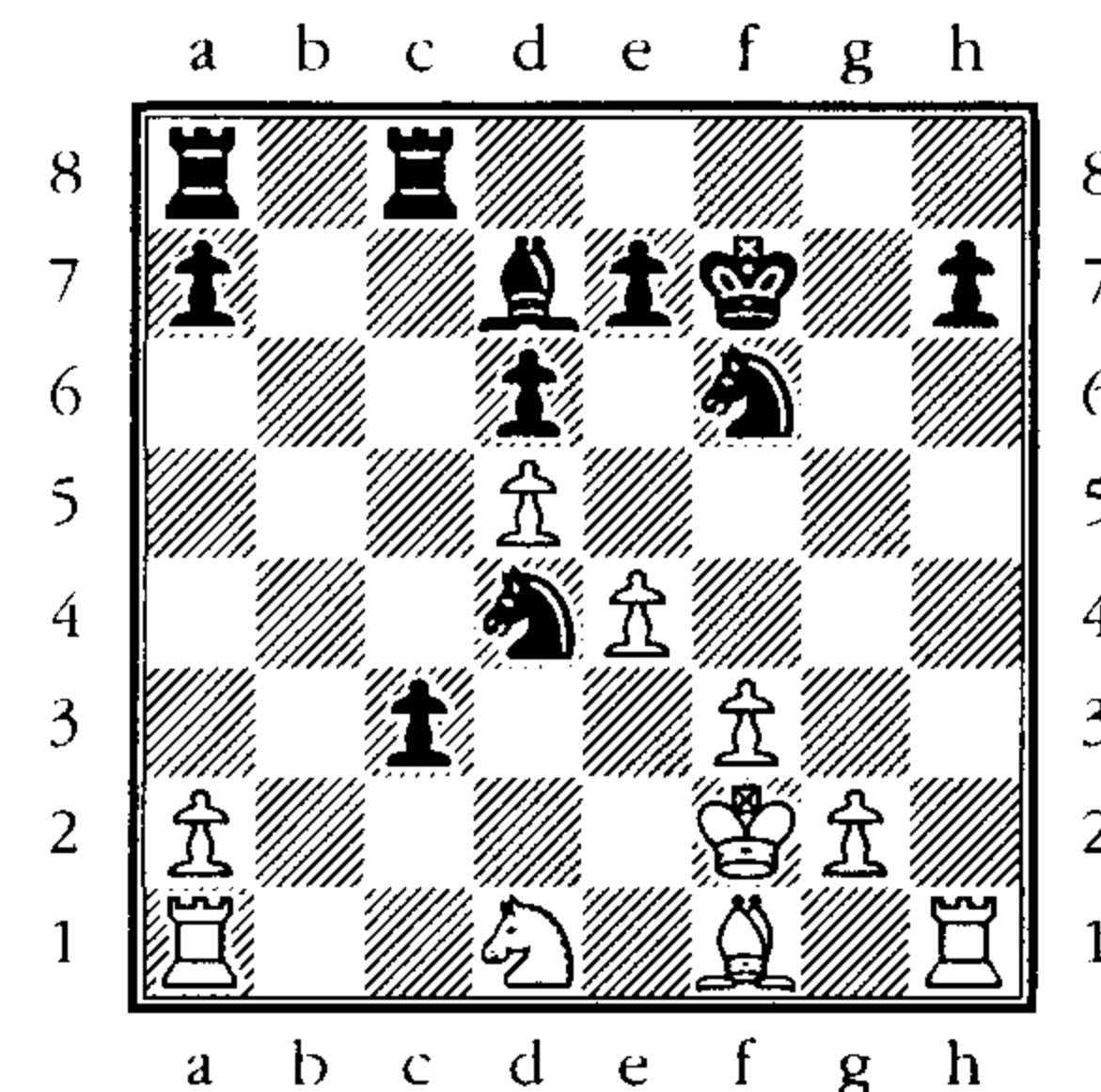
Black has just played 20...♘a6-b4. His position is favourable as his pieces are well-placed and in the long-term White's king is unlikely to be secure in the centre. On top of this any white kingside attack still has a long way to go. Having said this, if White had played a

move such as 21 ♔f2 Black would still have had to find a plan. With White's next move he 'expects' an automatic recapture.

21 hxg6? ♗xd4!

Exploiting the position of the white king and the concept of the 'family fork'.

22 gxf7+ ♔xf7 23 ♗xd4 ♘xc2+ 24 ♔f2 ♘xd4

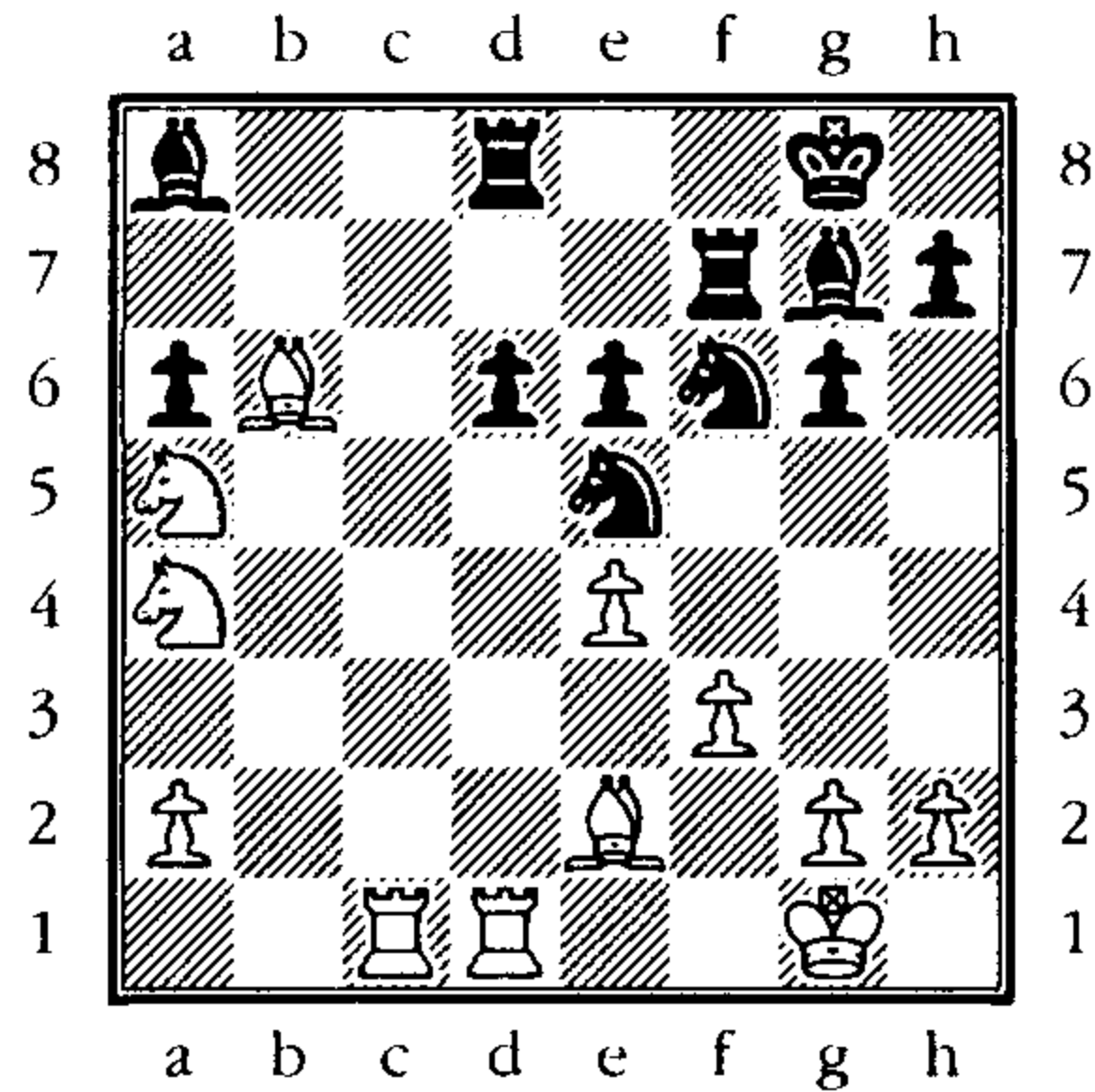


White is lost.

In our next game we feature another of Simon Ansell's positions, but this time things have gone from bad to worse (as Black had lost the thread of the position earlier in the middlegame) and White has what should be a winning advantage. Black, however, remains active and 'swindles' start to loom—a trademark of a strong player is the ability to get something out of nothing.

White: Roger Hardy
Black: Simon Ansell
Bristol League Open 1997

We join the game after Black has just played 26...♗f7. White has developed a 'healthy' positional advantage and now starts to convert this into material gain.



27 Nc5!

Exploiting the pin on the 'd'-file to hit at the weaknesses on e6 and a6.

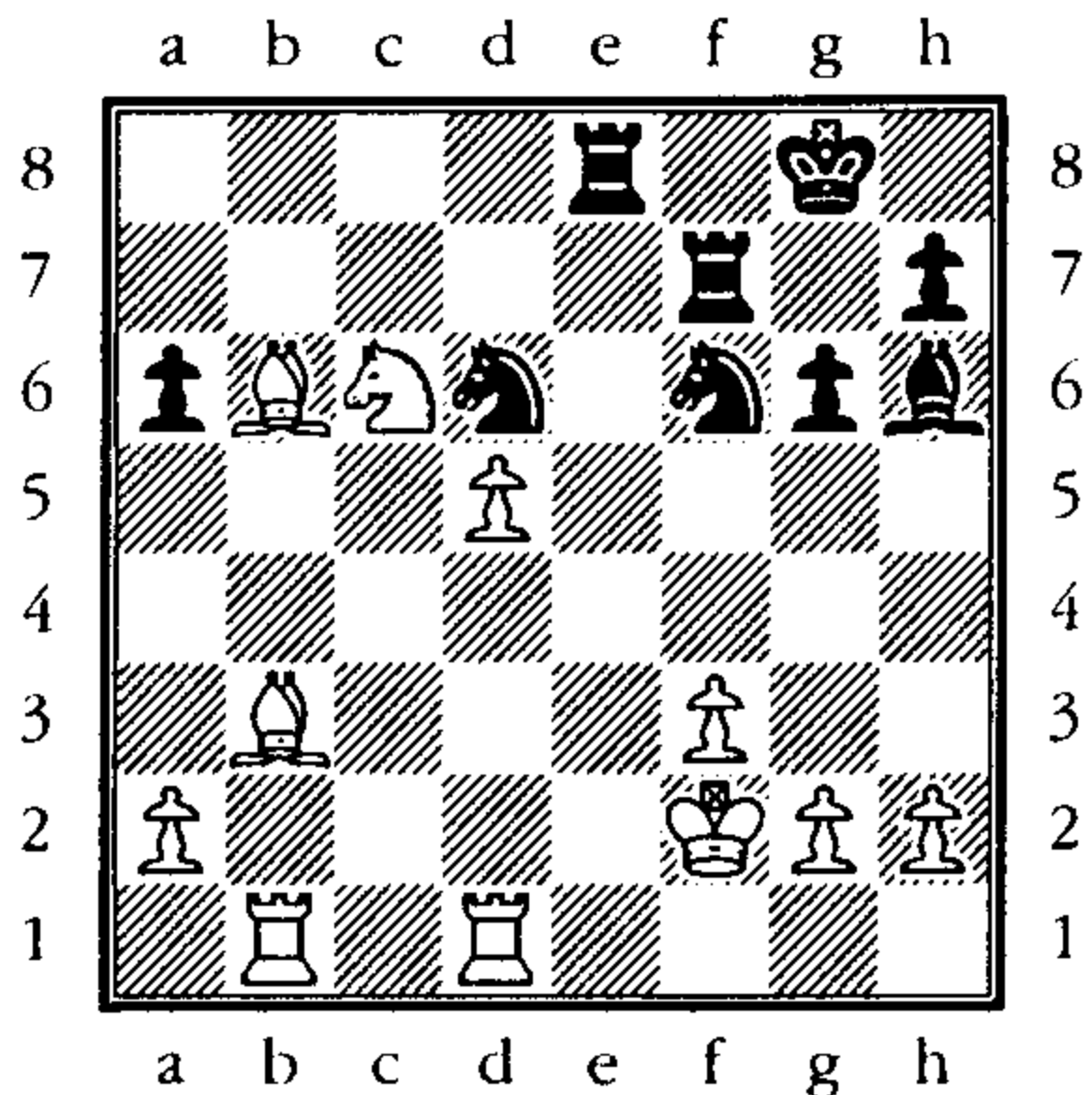
27...d5?

Black should have given his preference to securing the defence of e6.

28 Nxe6 Re8 29 Nc7

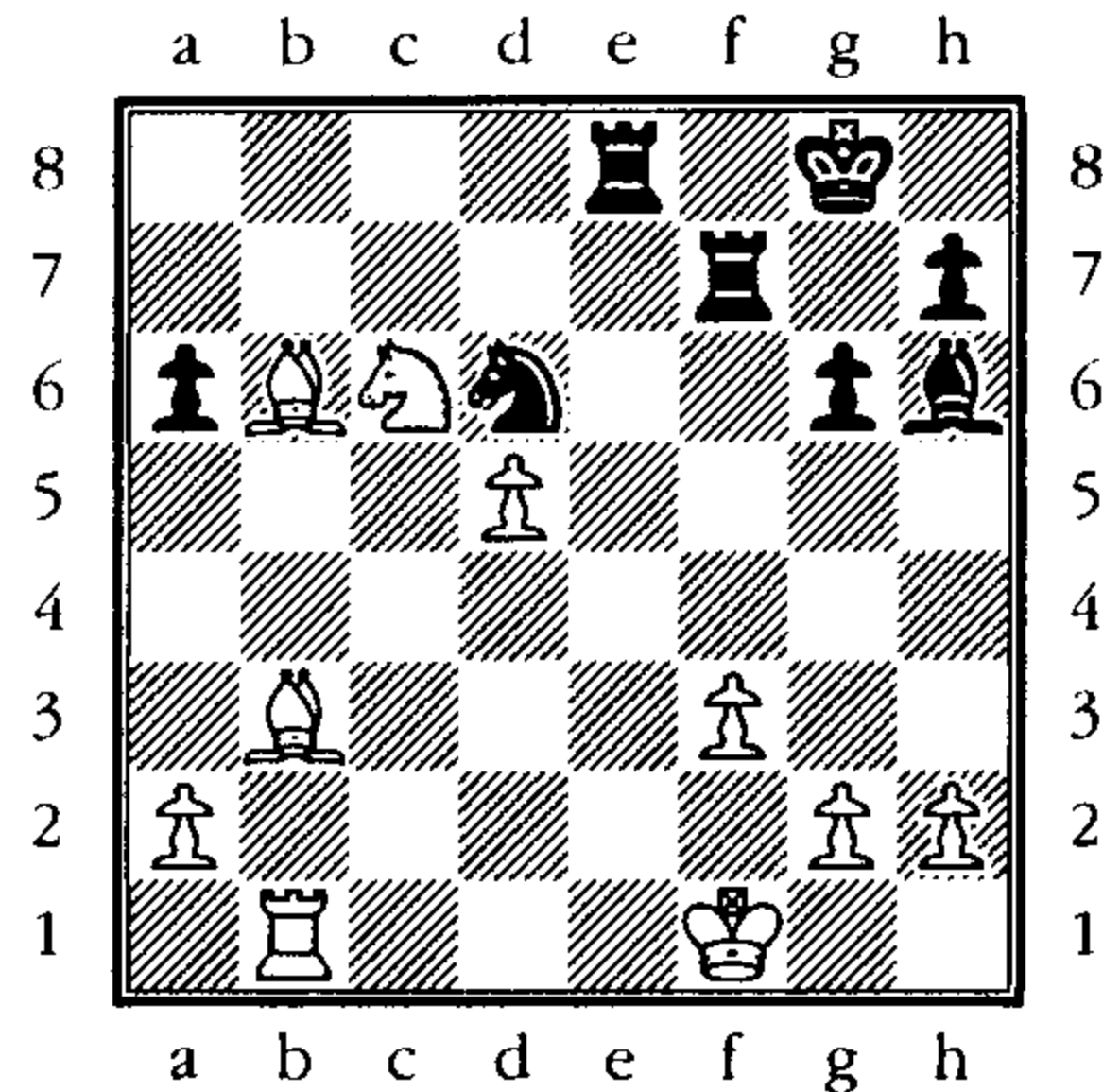
While not as strong as the text, 29 Nxc7 is tempting as it removes one of Black's biggest assets—his dark-squared bishop.

29... Rc8 30 Nxa8 Rxa8 31 exd5 Rd7 32 Nc6 Re8 33 Qf2 Nf7 34 Qc4 Nd6 35 Qb3 Rf7 36 Qb6 Rh6 37 Rb1?



Up to this point White had played sensibly without necessarily playing either the most accurate or practical moves—but somehow he had allowed himself to get into a position where a trick or accident was quite likely. In fairness to Black, after he lost material, he managed to keep the pieces on the board and on active squares—nevertheless with 37 Ra1 White would have maintained a clear advantage.

37... Nfe4+ 38 Qf1 Nc3 39 Re1 Nxb1 40 Rxb1



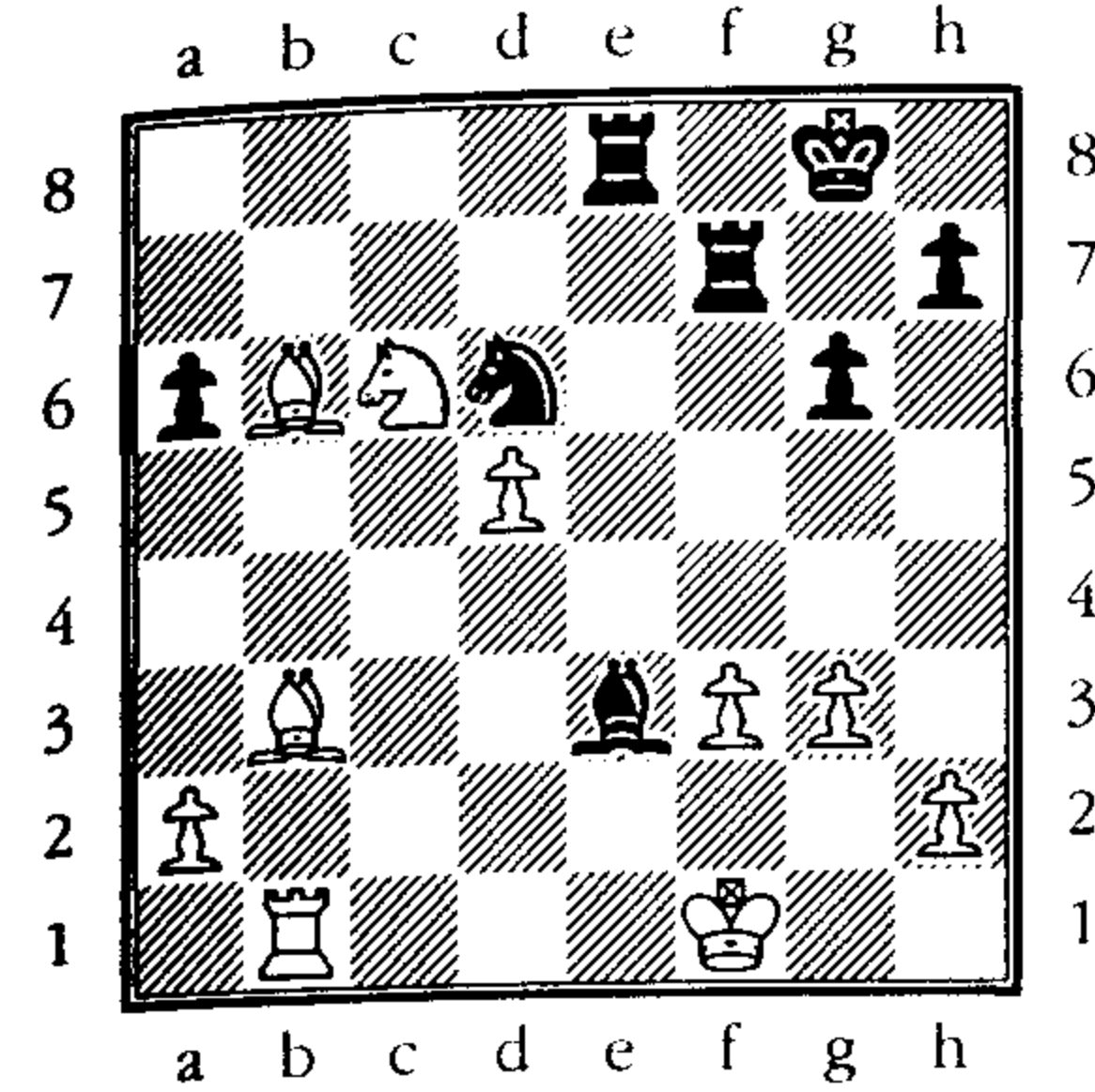
The position is less clear now, mainly because White's pawn on d5 is so well blockaded.

40... Qf4 41 g3

41 Nd8! Rf5 42 Qa4 activates White's pieces as 42... Nc4?! is nothing special after 43 Qxe8 Nd2+ 44 Qf2 Nxb1 45 Qd7 and White is still favourite.

41... Qe3!

Black turns the tide by displaying excellent judgement in exchanging the dark-squared bishops.



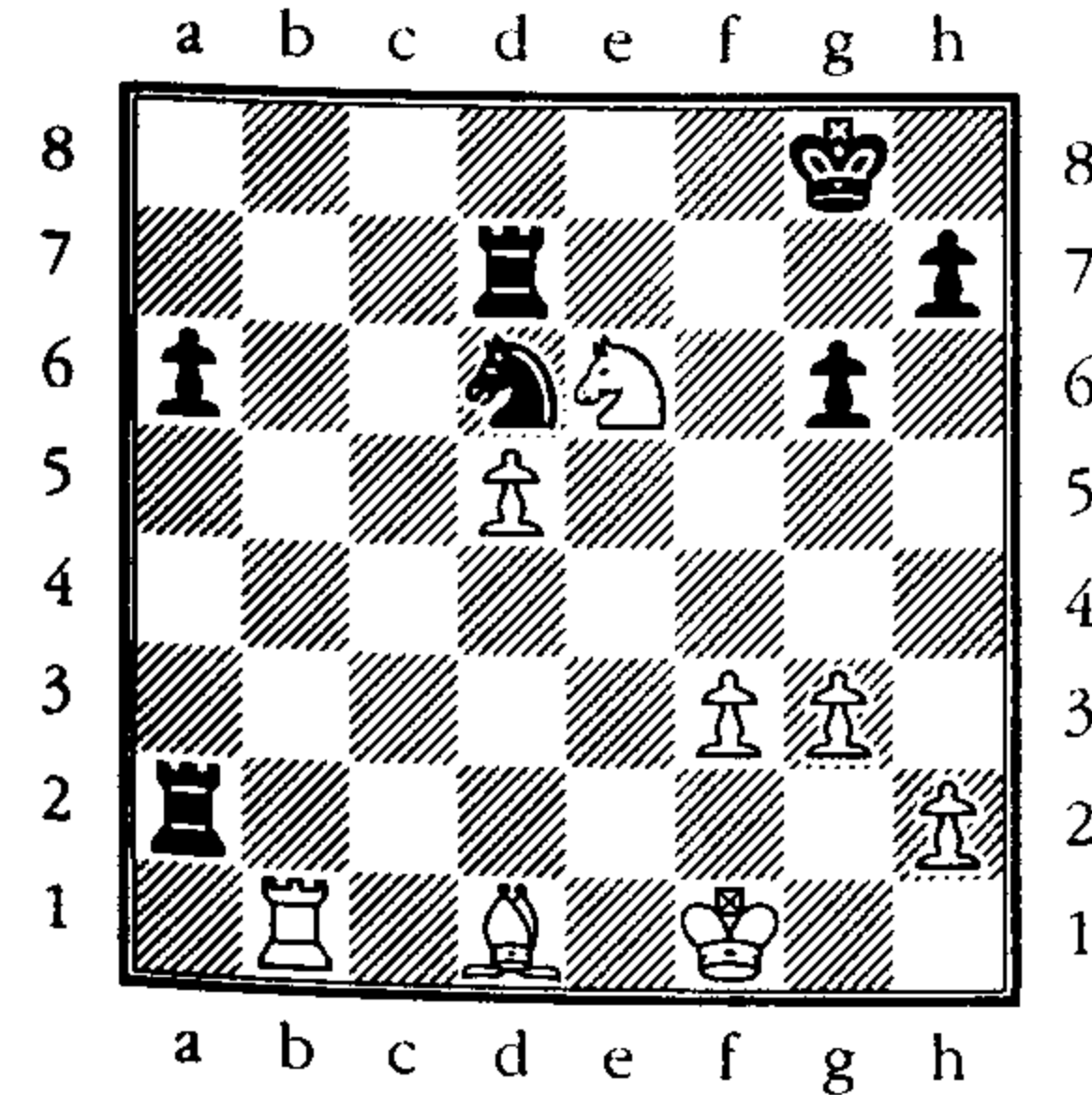
42 Qxe3

White could consider investing a pawn with 42 Nd4! Qxd4 43 Qxd4 Rxf3+ 44 Qg2 when, with the bishop pair and a pawn for the exchange, he has good practical chances of salvaging something from the game.

42... Rxe3 43 Qd1 Ra3 44 Nd8

44 Rb2 , defending along the second rank, might be best, e.g. 44... Nc4 (44... Rd3 45 Qe1) 45 Rb8+ Qg7 46 Qe1 Rxa2 47 Qb3 Ra1+ 48 Qe2 Na5 49 Nxa5 Rxa5 50 f4 is better for Black but not clearly decisive.

44... Rd7 45 Nc6 Rxa2



Black realises that White's back rank 'threats' are mainly optical.

46 Rb8+

46 $\text{Qa4!?$ Rb7 (46... Rxa4? 47 Nc5) 47 Rxb7 Nxb7 48 Qc6 Nd6 is good for Black.

46... Qf7 47 Rf8+

After 47 Qb3 Rxb2 48 Qa4 Ra7 49 Nd8+ Qg7 50 Nc6+ Qf6 White has back rank problems, i.e. 51 Rd8 Rb7 .

47... Qe7 48 Rh8 Ra1 49 Rxb7+ Nf7 50 Ng5 Rxd5 51 Nxf7

Following 51 Rxf7+ Qe8 52 Rf6 Rd2 53 Re6+ Qd7 54 h4 Raxd1+ 55 Re1 Rxe1+ 56 Qxe1 Rg2 57 Nc4 a5 Black's 'a'-pawn will prove decisive.

51... Rd2 0-1

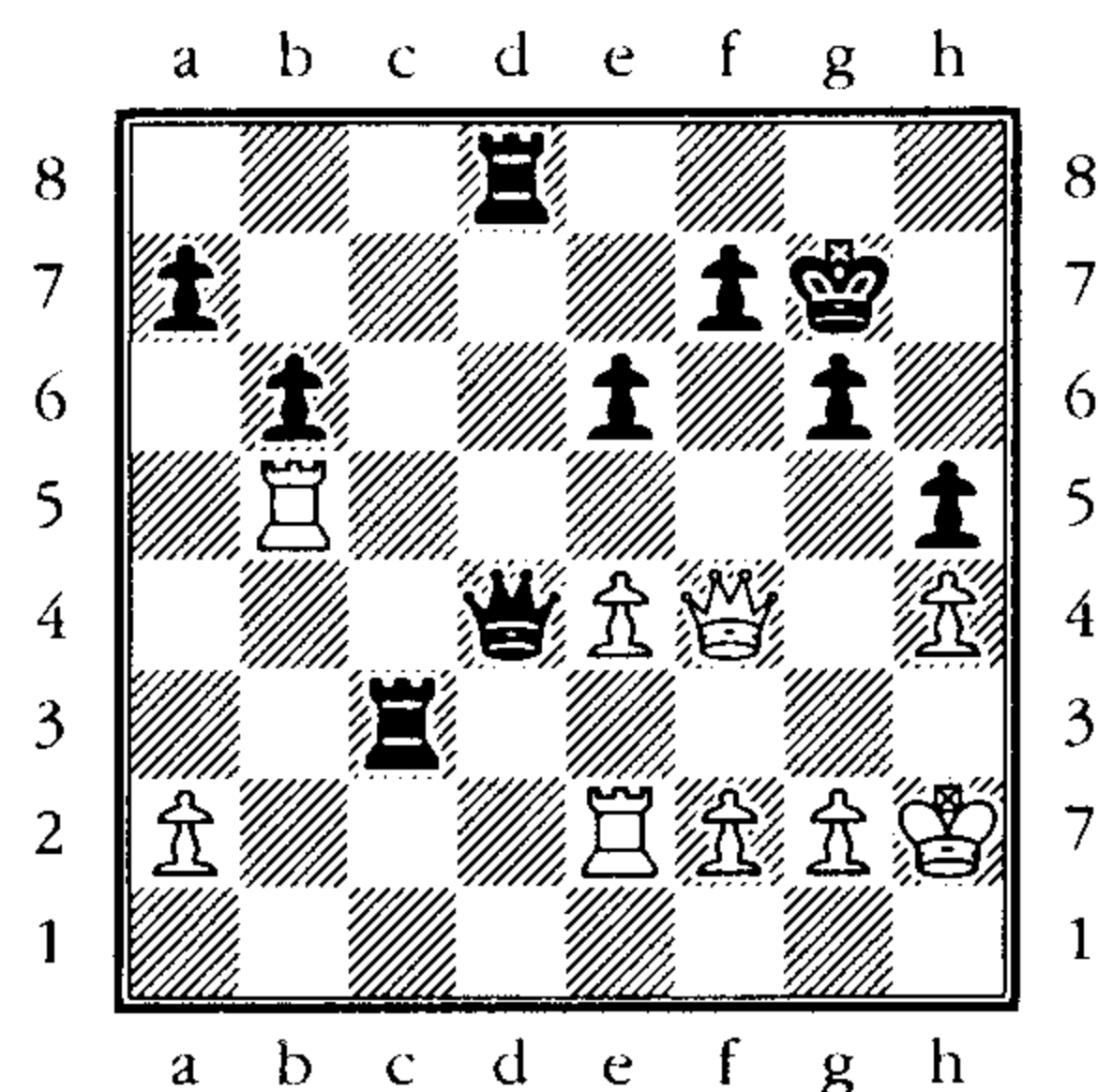
8) Miscalculation

To avoid the danger of 'losing the thread of the position' due to the failure to form a plan, it is better to have a poor plan than no plan at all! (however it is obviously more desirable to form a *good* plan) In many cases of miscalculation the problem lies in the fact that your opponent plays a tactic that has 'been on the cards' for some time but up to this point wouldn't have worked due to a possible resource. But now, thanks to a change in the position, this resource is no longer available or does not do the job intended. It is therefore vital, when your opponent has moved, not only to see and understand what his intention is but also to check again for a reoccurring tactical concept. For example, in the Sicilian Dragon there are a lot of positions where Black will aim for counterplay by

sacrificing the exchange on c3 and the fact that you (correctly) decided that it wasn't a viable option on the previous move doesn't mean that it isn't viable on the next turn. Miscalculating or simply missing a move or an idea is probably the most common way a player loses a game. A variation, which in our thought processes we regarded as more or less irrelevant, now becomes the 'main line'.

The following position shows how a miscalculation can instantly change the assessment of a position:

White: Chris Baker
Black: Richard Webb
4NCL, Telford 1997



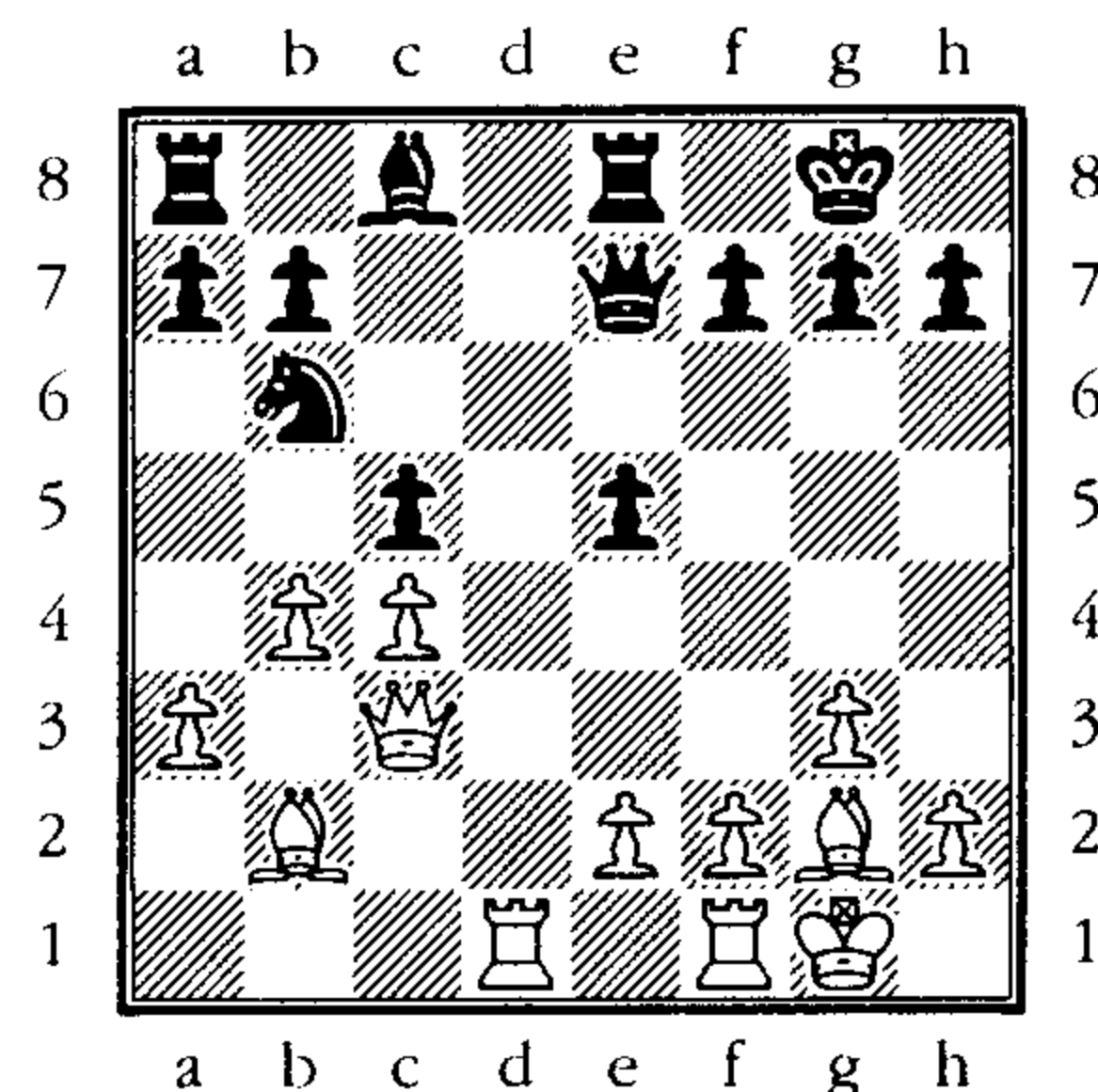
I had needlessly dropped a pawn a few moves earlier and was expecting to 'suffer' for some time. Not only is Black a sound pawn ahead but he also controls the open 'c' and 'd'-files, his king is safe and he should be able to play on without any real risk. With 23...♖c4 Black could plan to play ...♗d4-d6, exchanging the queens—if he plays 23...♗d6 straight away White can hope for some counterplay on the kingside dark squares with 24 e5. Instead Black opted for 23...a6 and

after 24 ♖xb6! White wins back the pawn and activates his rook, enough to save the game. In fact Black played 24...♗xb6 and we agreed a draw (White plays 25 ♗e5+ and 26 ♗e5xc3). A lucky escape but, as my father used to say, 'it's better to be lucky than good!'

A game can quickly and violently swing in one person's favour if your opponent makes a tactical miscalculation, for example:

White: Alan Richardson
Black: Chris Baker
Hanham Open, 1997

We will join the position after 15...♗b6



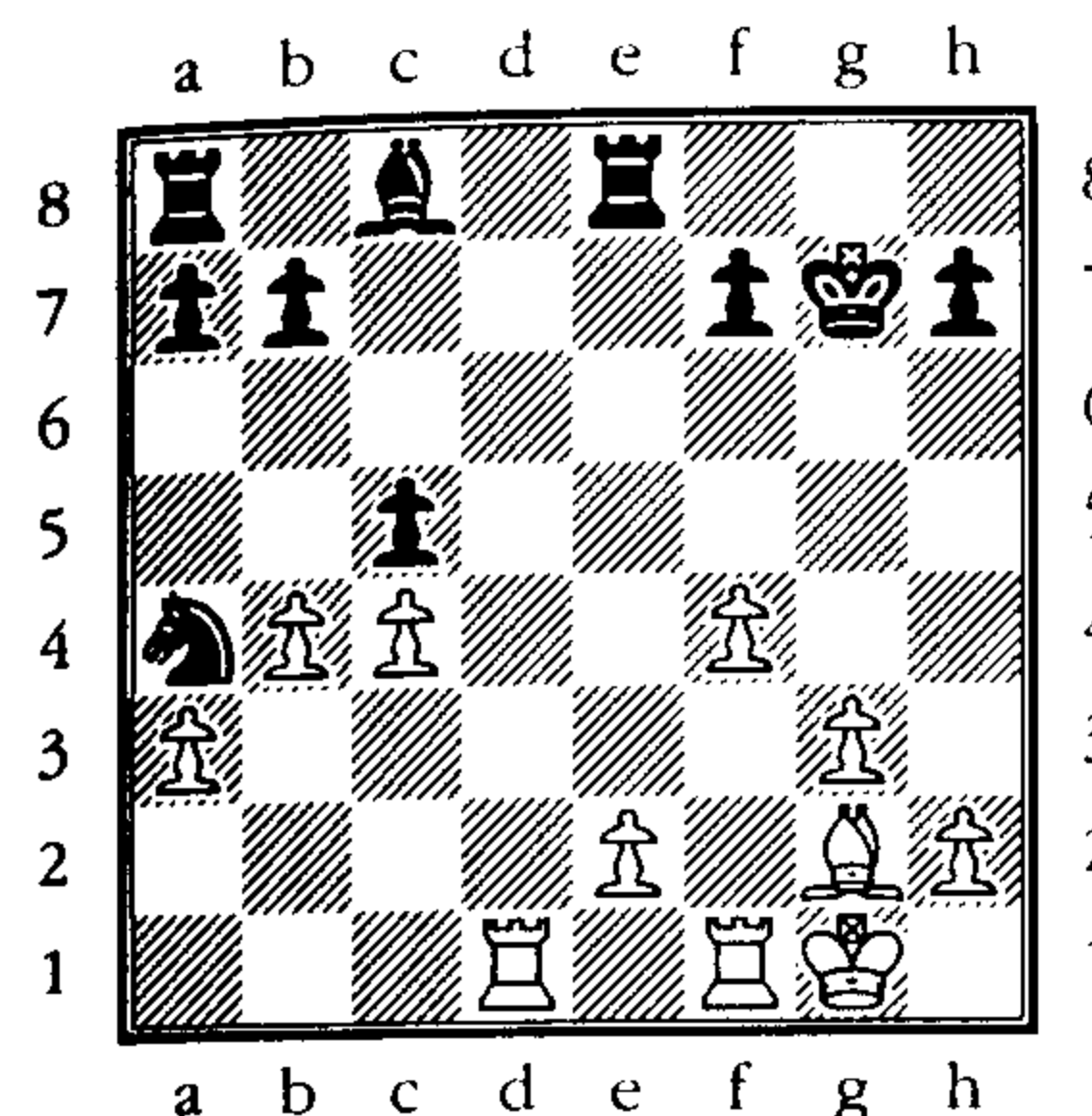
White's position is sound enough, he has the bishop pair and some extra space and with a move such as 16 ♖a1 he could claim some sort of minimal edge. Instead of this he tried (prematurely) to force the issue by 'ignoring' Black's 'threat' of ...♗b6-a4.

16 f4? ♗a4 17 ♗xe5 ♗f8!

Both defending against the mate on g7 and 'hitting' the white queen with the rook on e8. Furthermore

White cannot move the queen on e5 to protect his knight on b2, therefore he is committed to giving up material.

18 ♗xg7+ ♗xg7 19 ♖xg7 ♗xg7

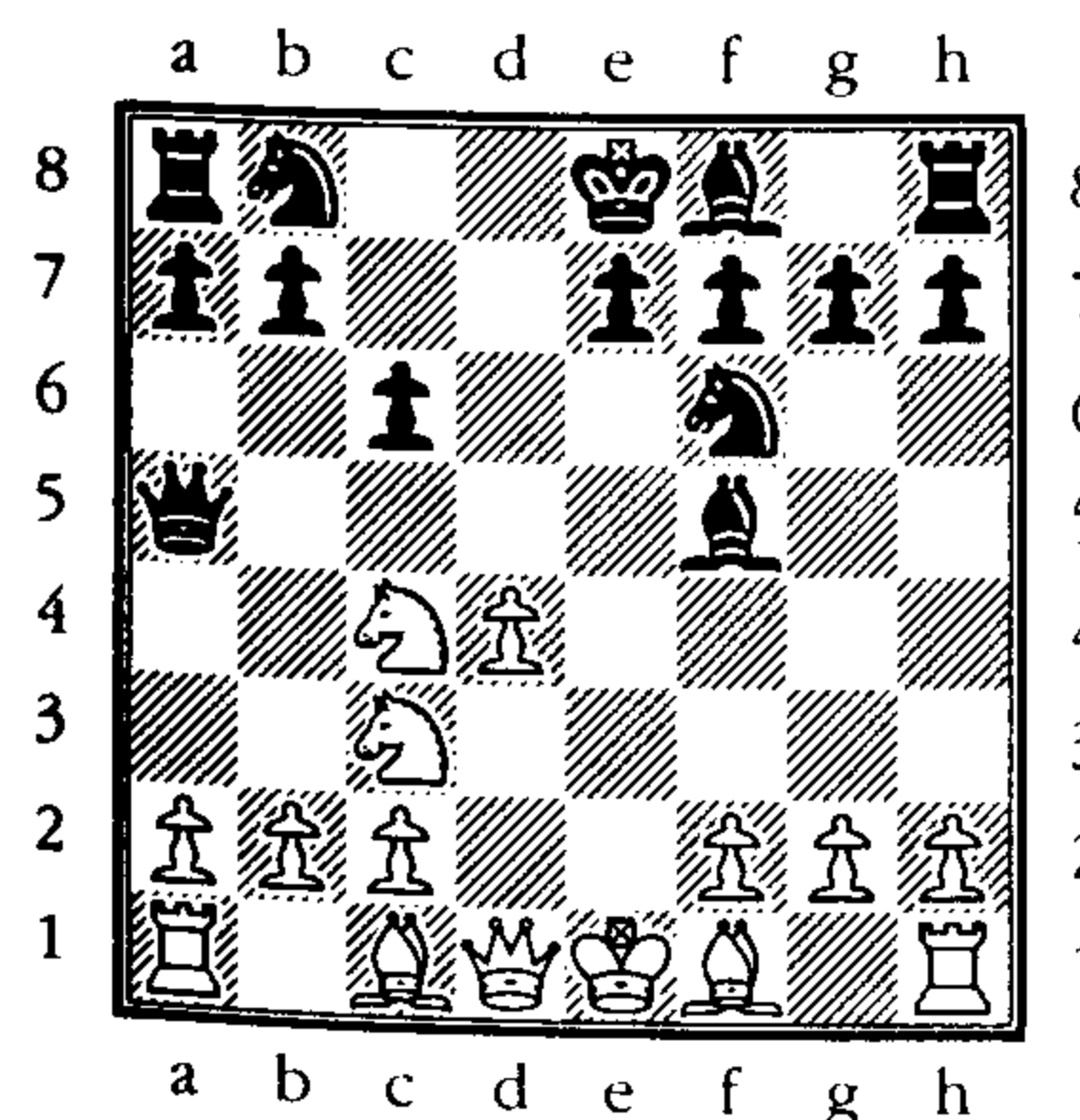


Black has a winning advantage.

In the next game we will see how two apparently transposing captures are in reality entirely different.

White: Simon Ansell
Black: Andrew Borkowski
Bristol League Open, 1997
Scandinavian Defence

1 e4 d5 2 exd5 ♗xd5 3 ♗c3 ♗a5
4 ♗f3 ♗f6 5 d4 c6 6 ♗e5 ♖f5 7 ♗c4



7 ♖c4, 7 g4 and 7 ♖d3 have all been tried.

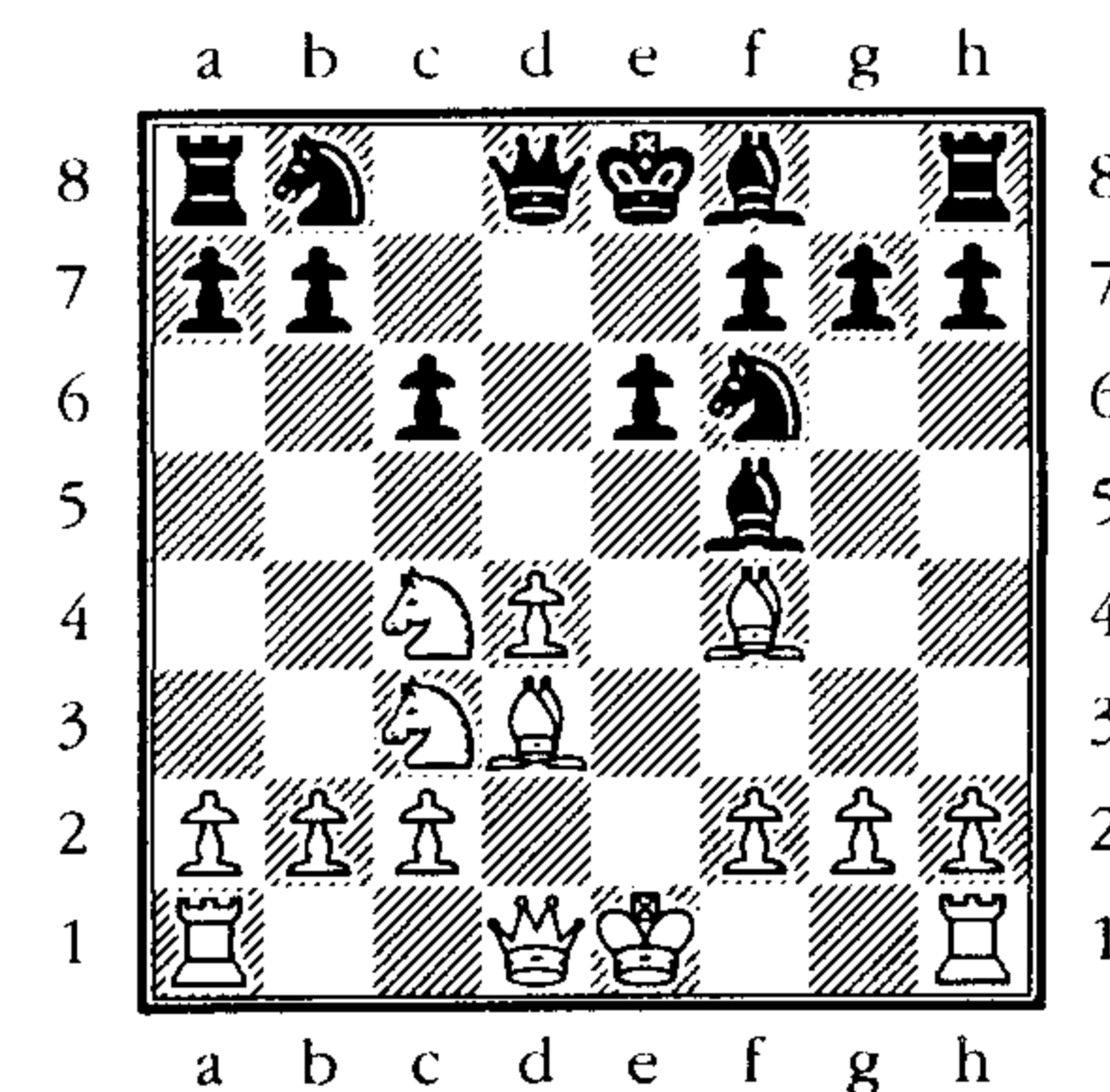
7...♗d8 8 ♖f4

The fact that there has been no 'common agreement' on White's best reply tends to suggest that he hasn't achieved any real opening advantage with this variation.

8 ♖f4 e6 9 ♖d3?!

The game B.Vuckovic-N.Zhukova, Yugoslavia, 2000, continued tamely with 9 ♖e2 ♖e7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♖f3 ♗a6 12 a3 ♗c7 13 ♖e1 1/2-1/2.

9...♖xd3

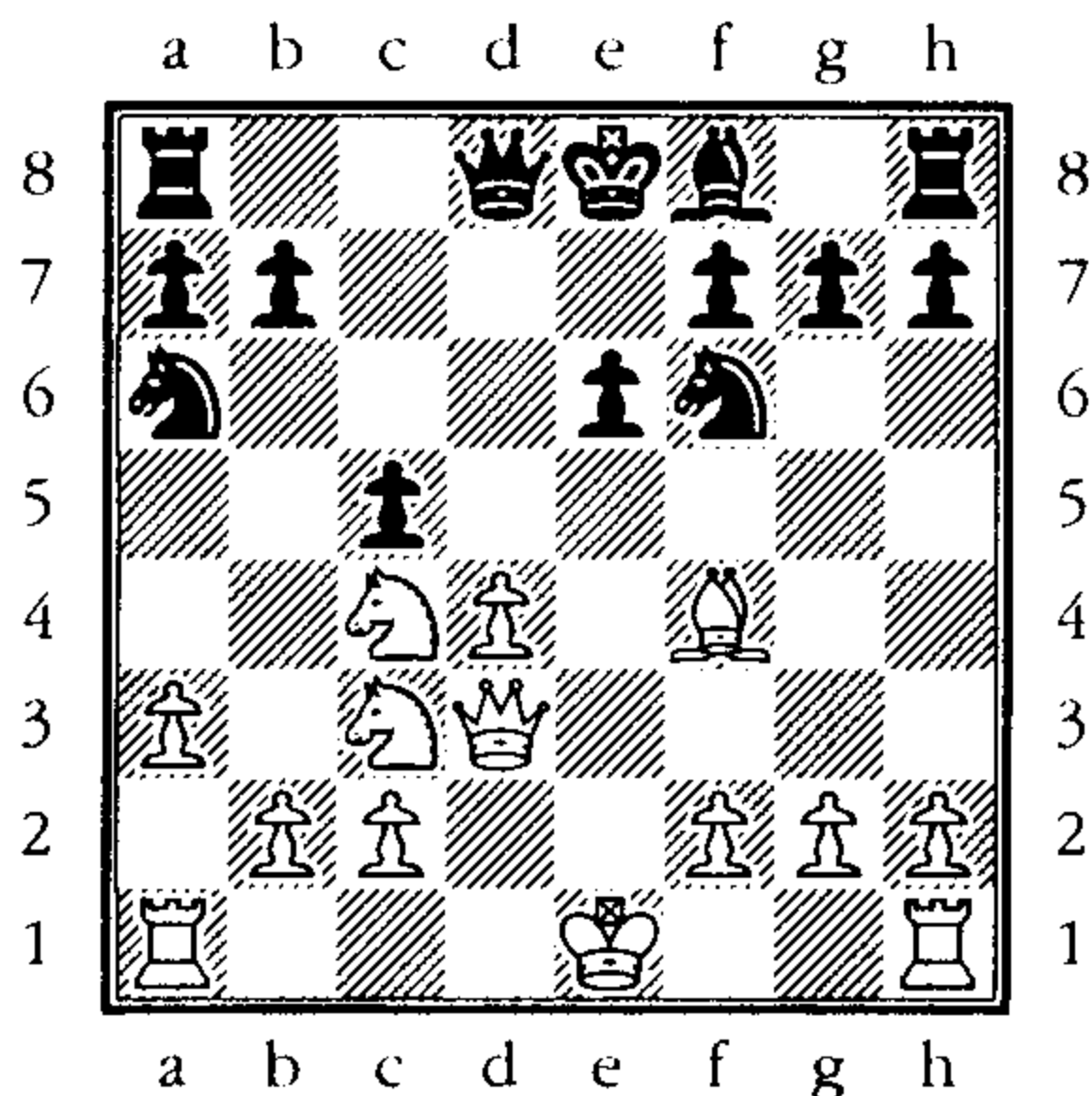


9...♗xd4 is by no means unplayable, e.g. 10 ♖e5 ♗h4 11 ♖xf5 ♗xc4 12 ♖d3 ♗b4. White can claim some initiative and lead in development for the pawn but still has a lot of work to do convert it into anything concrete.

10 ♗xd3 ♗a6 11 a3 c5?

Too committal in that it potentially opens up the position too much—at a time when Black is behind in development and has yet to get his king to a safe haven. Better would have been 11...♗c7

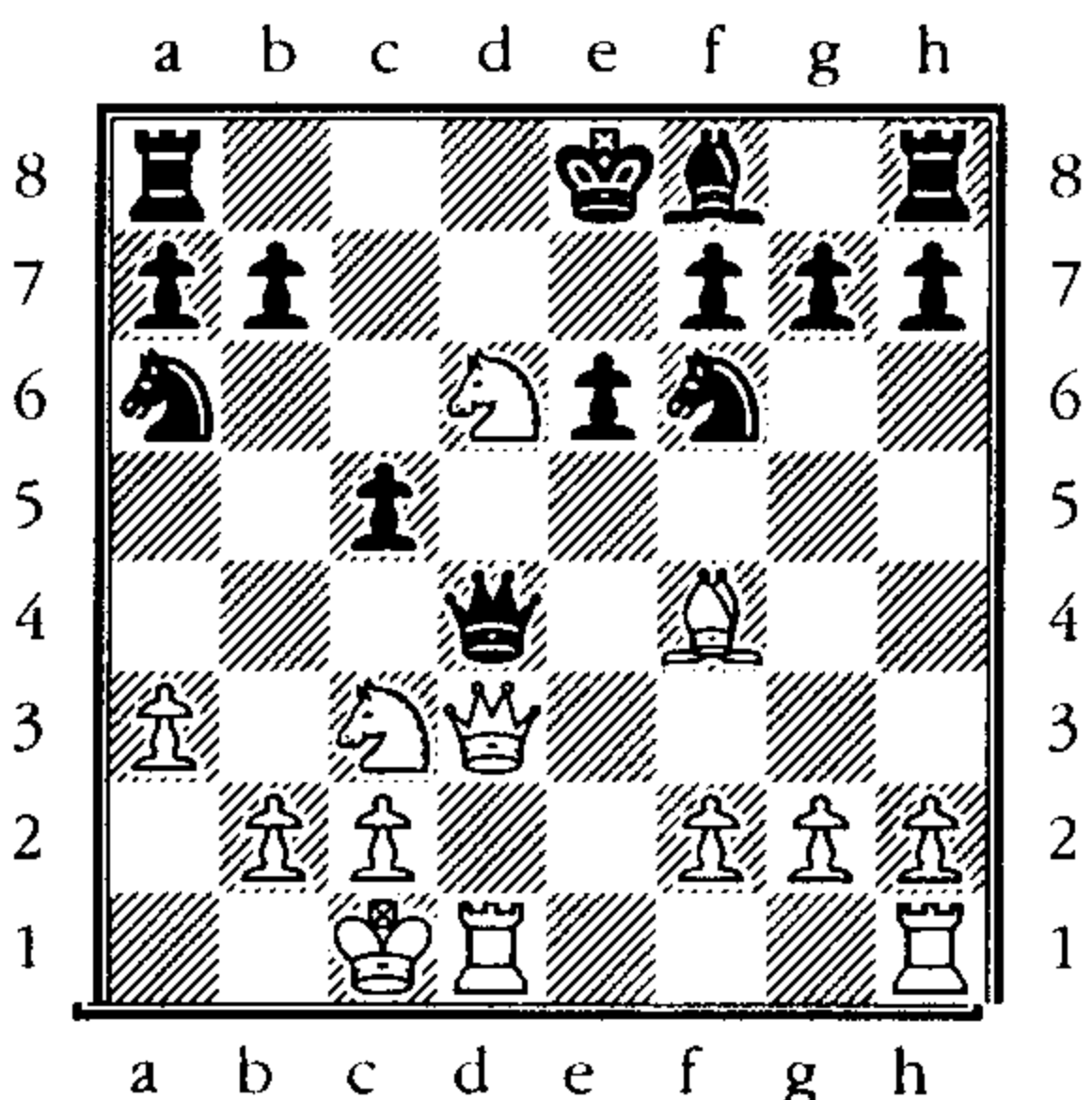
when after 12 0-0-0 (12 ♖g3 ♗xd4!?) 12...♘cd5 13 ♕e5 ♕e7 leads to a solid position for Black.



12 0-0-0 ♖xd4??

Black probably thought that the text would transpose to 12...cxd4 13 ♗xd4 (13 ♘b5!?! ♗d5 14 ♖he1 leaves White with a strong initiative for the pawn) 13...♗xd4 14 ♖xd4 ♕c5 15 ♖d2 (15 ♘d6+? ♕e7 16 ♖d2 ♘h5 is better for Black) 15...0-0 16 ♖hd1, when White can claim only a small advantage.

13 ♘d6+!

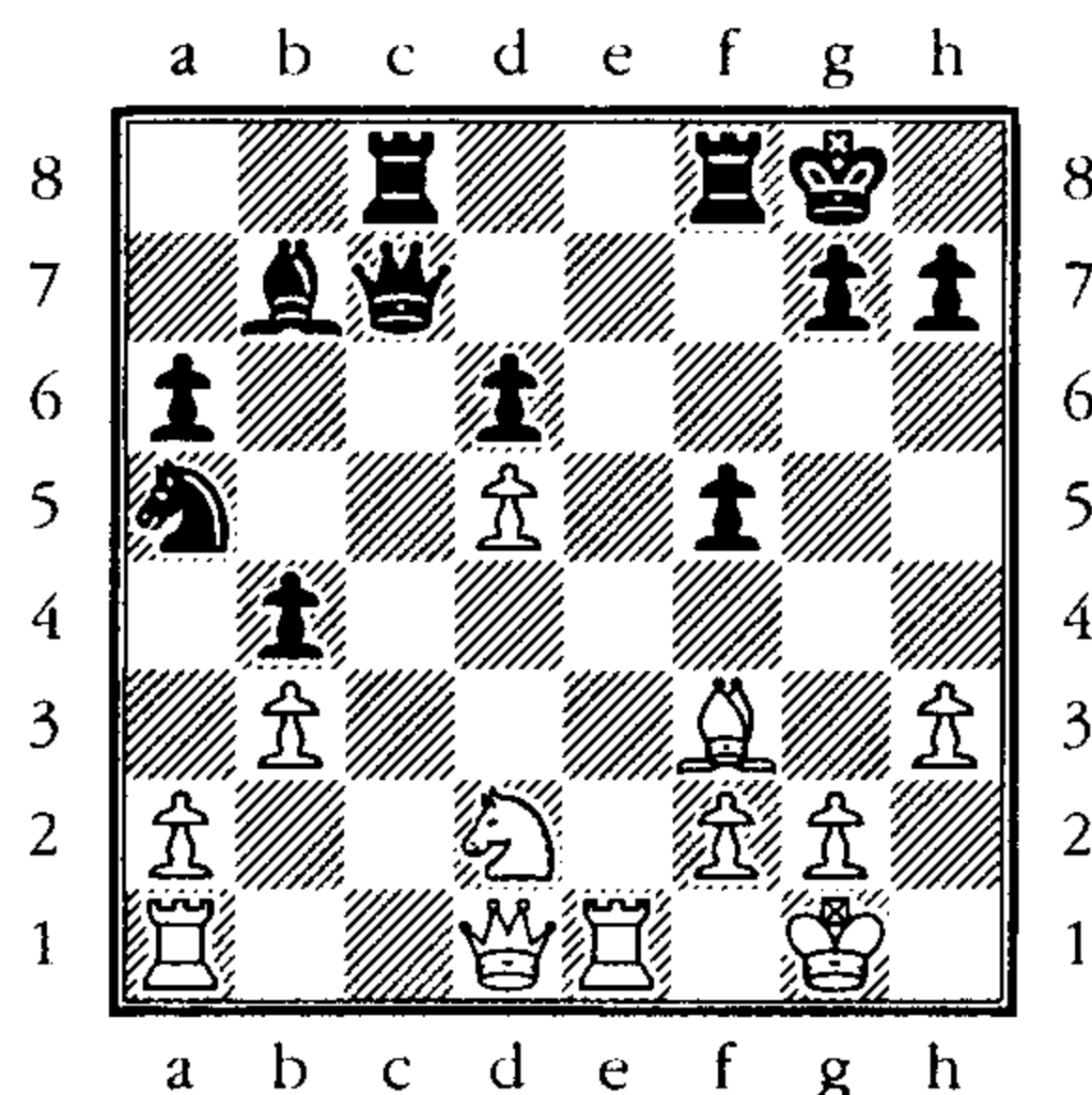


13...♕e7 1-0

There was little respite in 13...♕xd6 14 ♗b5+ ♕e7 15 ♖xd4 cxd4 16 ♗xb7+ ♘c7 17 ♕xd6+ ♕xd6 18 ♗b4+ ♕c6 19 ♗c4+ ♕b7 20 ♘b5 and Black is in terrible trouble. Black resigned without waiting to see 14 ♗f3 when his position is in shreds.

The following two games link well together as they have the common theme of 'knights on the rim are dim!' The first is a study of outstanding chess logic from the 2001/2 FIDE world chess championship.

White: Alexander Morozevich
Black: Ruslan Ponomarev
FIDE World Championship,
Moscow 2001/2



We join the position after 22...♖f6-f8. To sum up: both kings are safe although I would describe White's as rock-solid; in terms of pawn 'islands' the pawn structures are identical; White controls the 'e'-file whereas Black has marginally more control of the 'c'-file; at the moment Black's bishop is poor and his knight on a5 without squares

—although if it could redeploy to c5 or e5 it would be a useful piece.

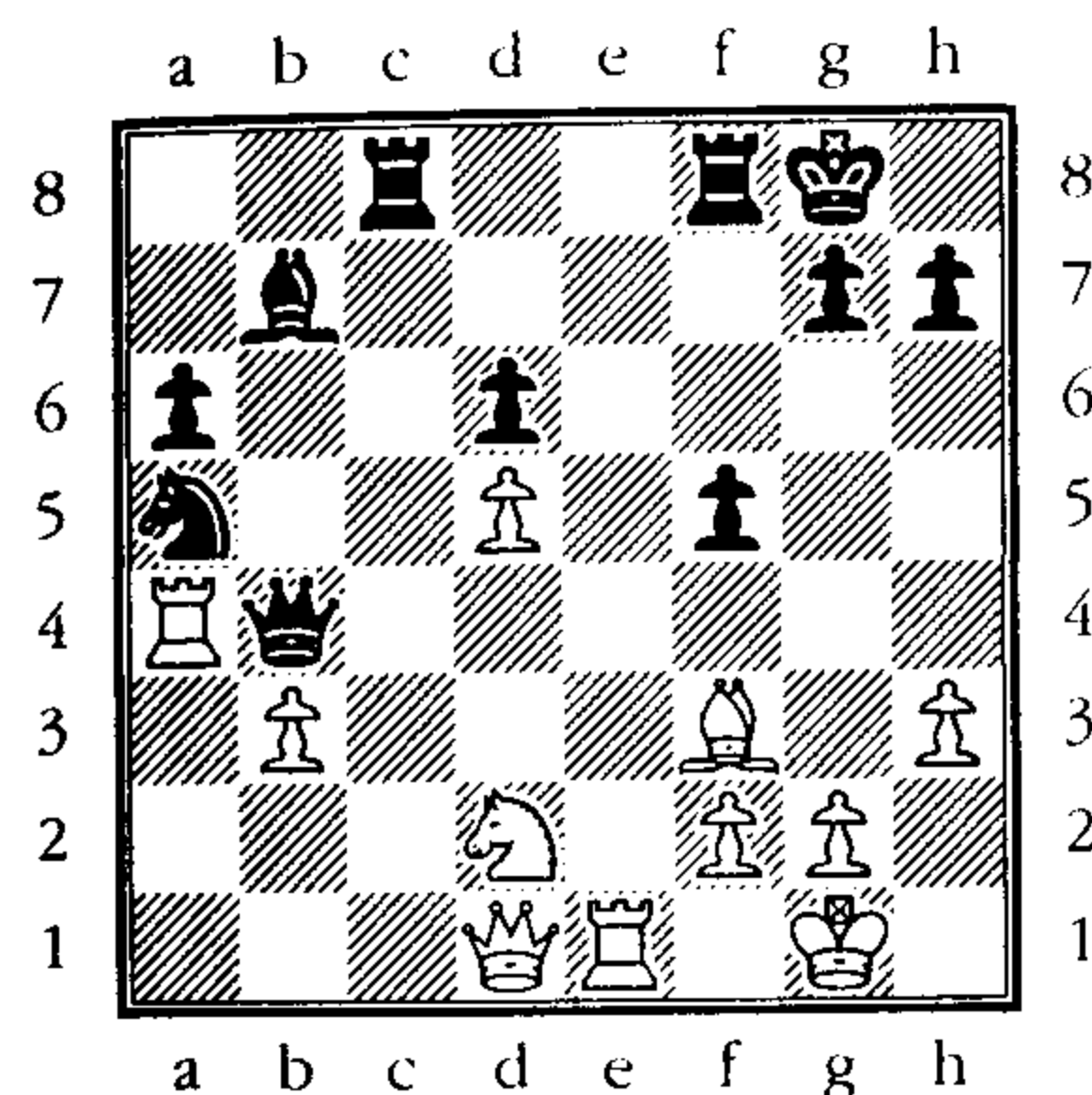
23 a3!

White exploits the fact that the knight on a5 has no squares.

23...♗b6

23...bxa3? 24 b4 ♘c4 25 ♖c1 ♘b2 26 ♖xc7 ♘xd1 27 ♖xb7 wins a piece.

24 axb4 ♗xb4 25 ♖a4



25...♗c3

Alternatives are:

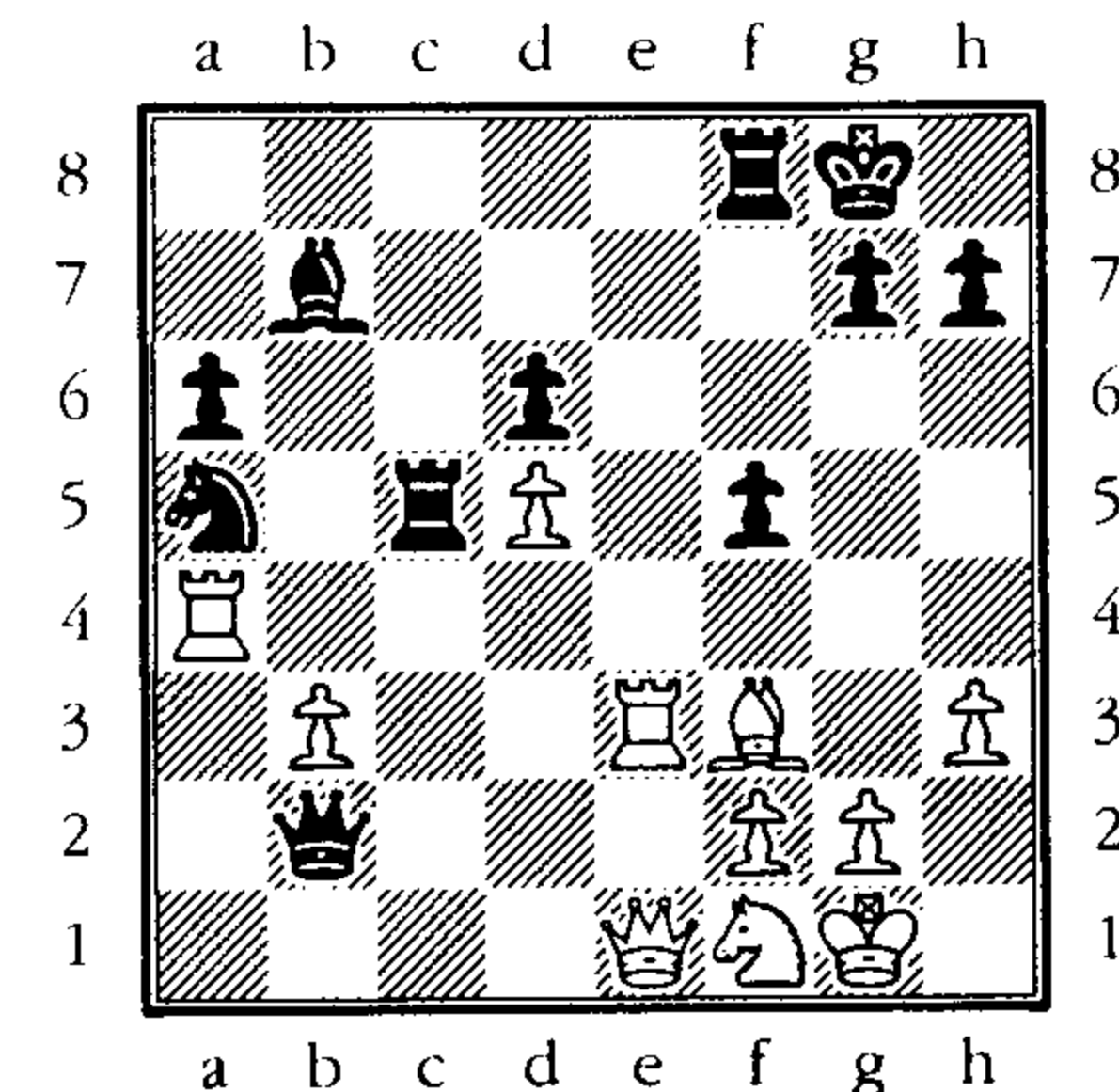
a) 25...♗c5? 26 b4;

b) 25...♗b6 26 ♖e7! (threatening ♖a4xa5 and ♖e7xb7) 26...♖f7 (26...♕a8? 27 ♗a1 threatens not only the knight on a5 but also ♗axg7 mate) 27 ♖xf7 ♕xf7 28 ♖f4! threatening b3-b4 as well as the pawn on f5.

26 ♖e3 ♗b2

Played in order to meet ♖a4xa5 with ♖c1.

27 ♘f1 ♖c5 28 ♗e1!



Once again exploiting the position of the black knight.

28...♖c1

28...♘xb3 29 ♖b4—pin and win!

29 ♗xa5 ♗b1 30 ♕e2

For all intents and purposes the game is now effectively over.

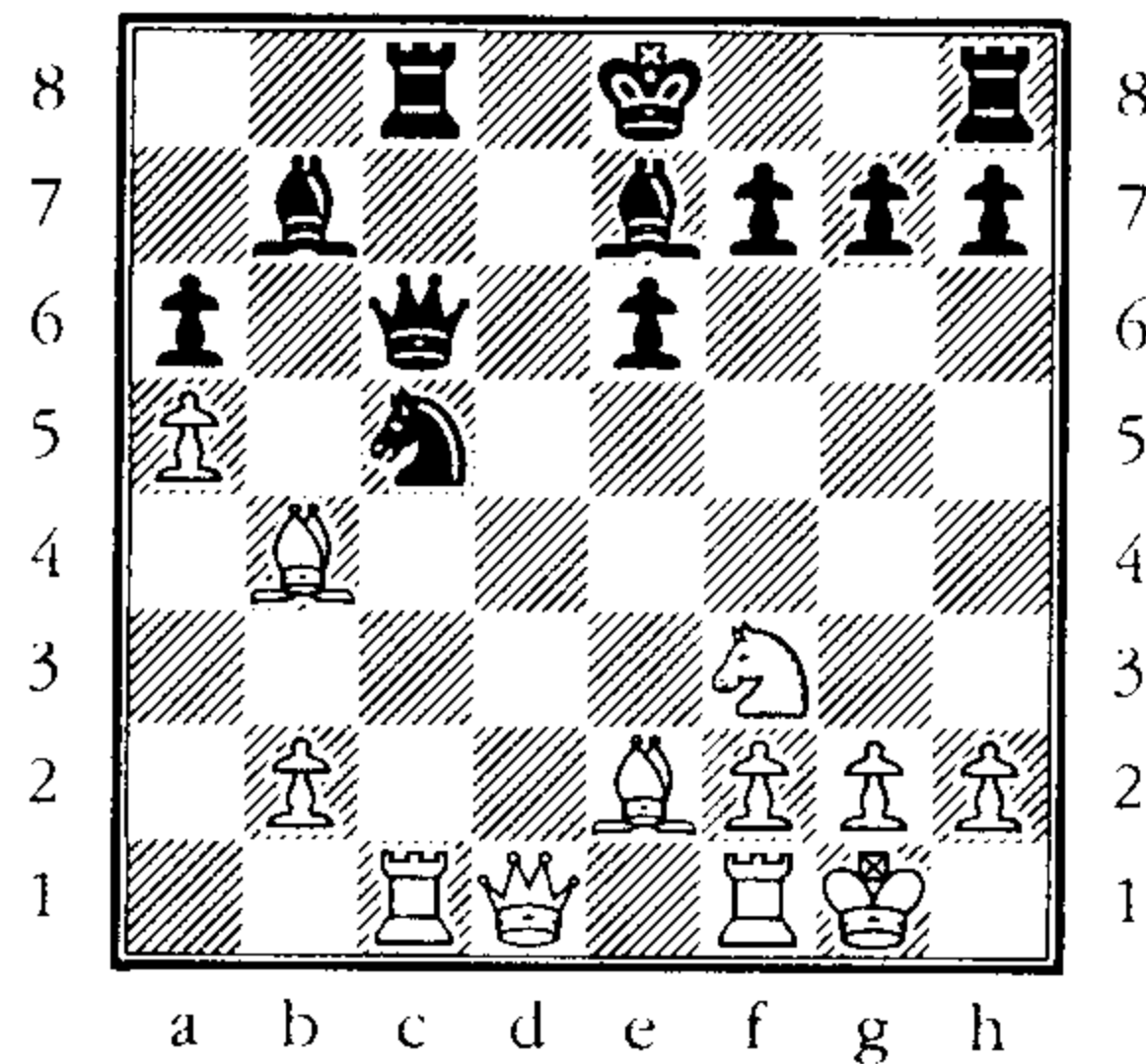
30...f4 31 ♖f3 g5 32 ♕d3 ♗b2 33 ♖c4 1-0

White's play was an outstanding example of consistent play based on a single but deadly idea, that of the potential weakness of the opponent's knight in having no path to safety.

Our next example is from the 2001/2 Hastings Premier and illustrates the same principle, although this time Black voluntarily directs her knight to the edge of the board after offering the exchange of queens. However this exchange does little to secure the knight's future!

We join the position after White has just played 20 ♕c4-e2.

White: Pentyala Harikrishna
Black: Irina Krush
Hastings Premier 2001/2



20... ♖a4??

This is a strategic error which doesn't become obvious for several moves. However it links nicely to the previous game and just goes to show 'knights on the rim are dim!'

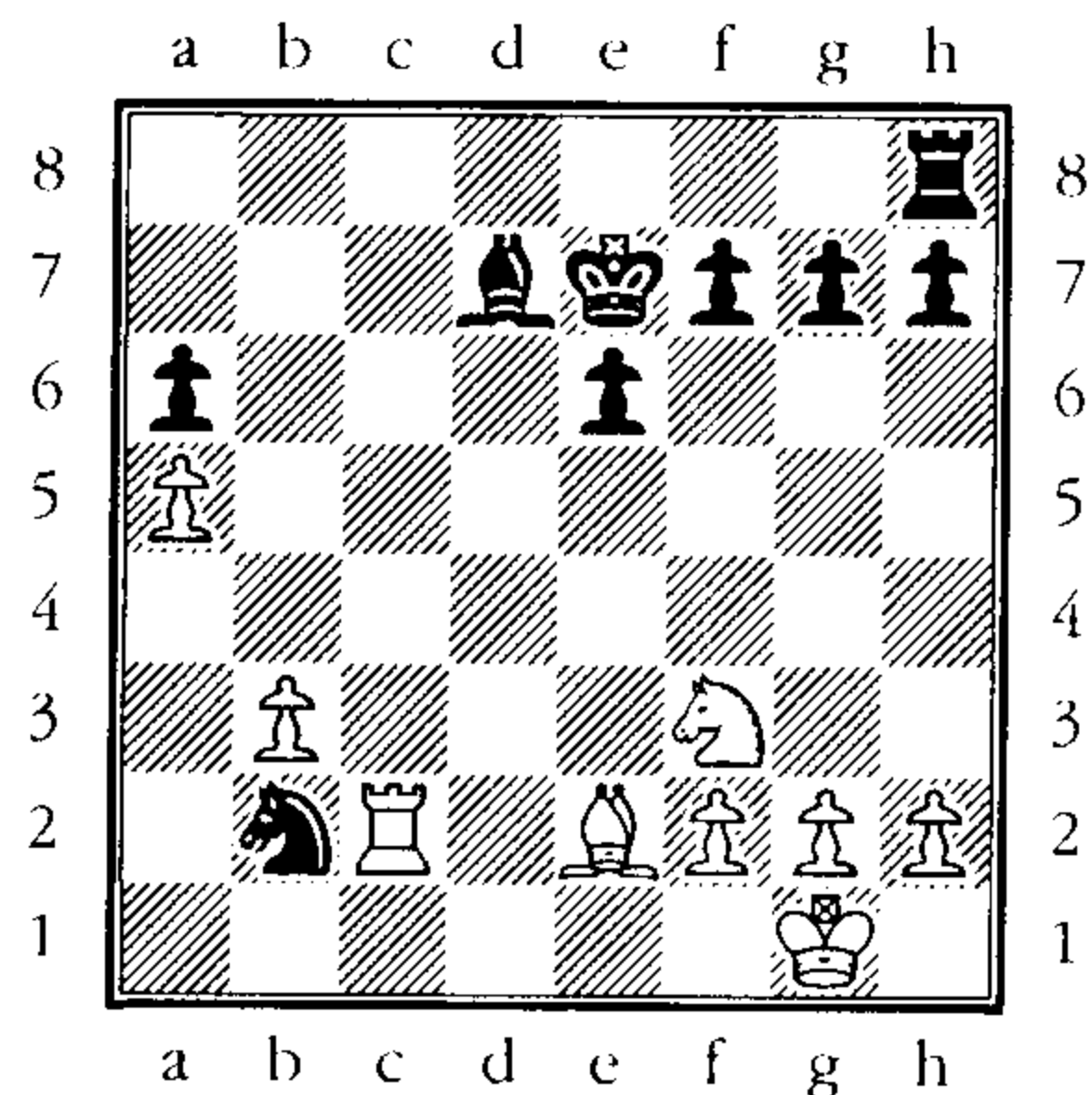
21 ♖xa4+ ♜xa4 22 ♜xc8+!

Gaining a vital tempo as well as gaining control of the 'c'-file.

22... ♙xc8 23 ♜c1!

Now Black cannot afford the time to take on b4 because of ♜c1xc8xh8.

23... ♙d7 24 ♙xe7 ♚xe7 25 b3 ♜b2 26 ♜c2

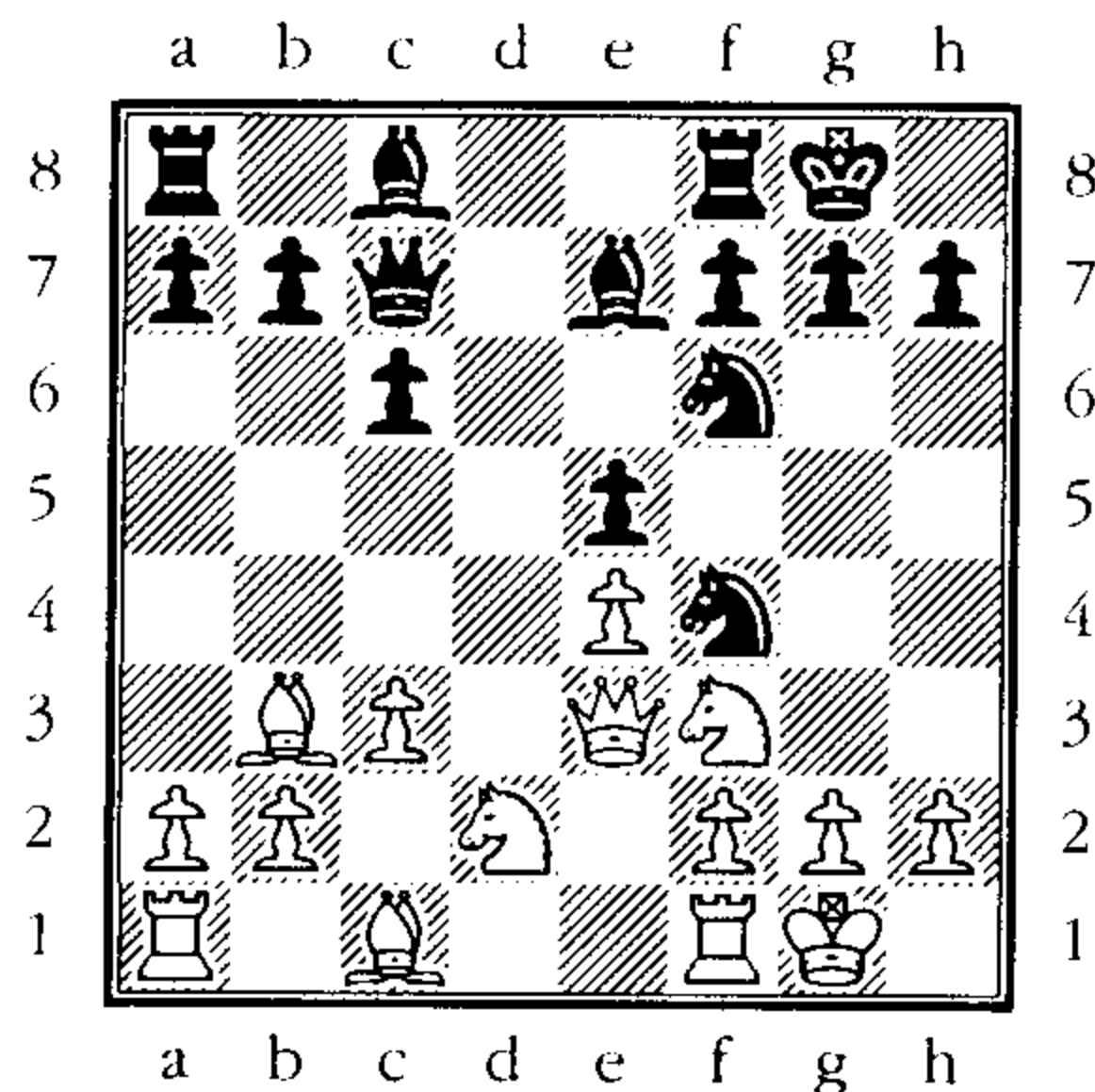


And the knight falls.

26... ♜c8 27 ♜xb2 ♜c1+ 28 ♙f1 ♙b5 29 ♜d2 1-0

Our final example shows how easily the initiative can change sides.

White: David K. Evans
Black: Chris Baker
Ron Bruce Memorial tournament,
Paignton



White has a solid enough position and with 13 ♜c4 ♜g4 14 ♖e1 ♜d3 15 ♖e2 ♜d8 16 h3 the game is approximately level. Instead White plays a tactic to 'win a pawn'.

13 ♜xe5?! ♖xe5 14 ♜c4

No better is 14 ♜f3 ♜xg2 15 ♜xe5 (15 ♜xg2 ♖h5 is worse for White than the game as Black is threatening... ♙c8-h3+) 15... ♜xe3 16 ♙xe3 ♜xe4 when White is a pawn down.

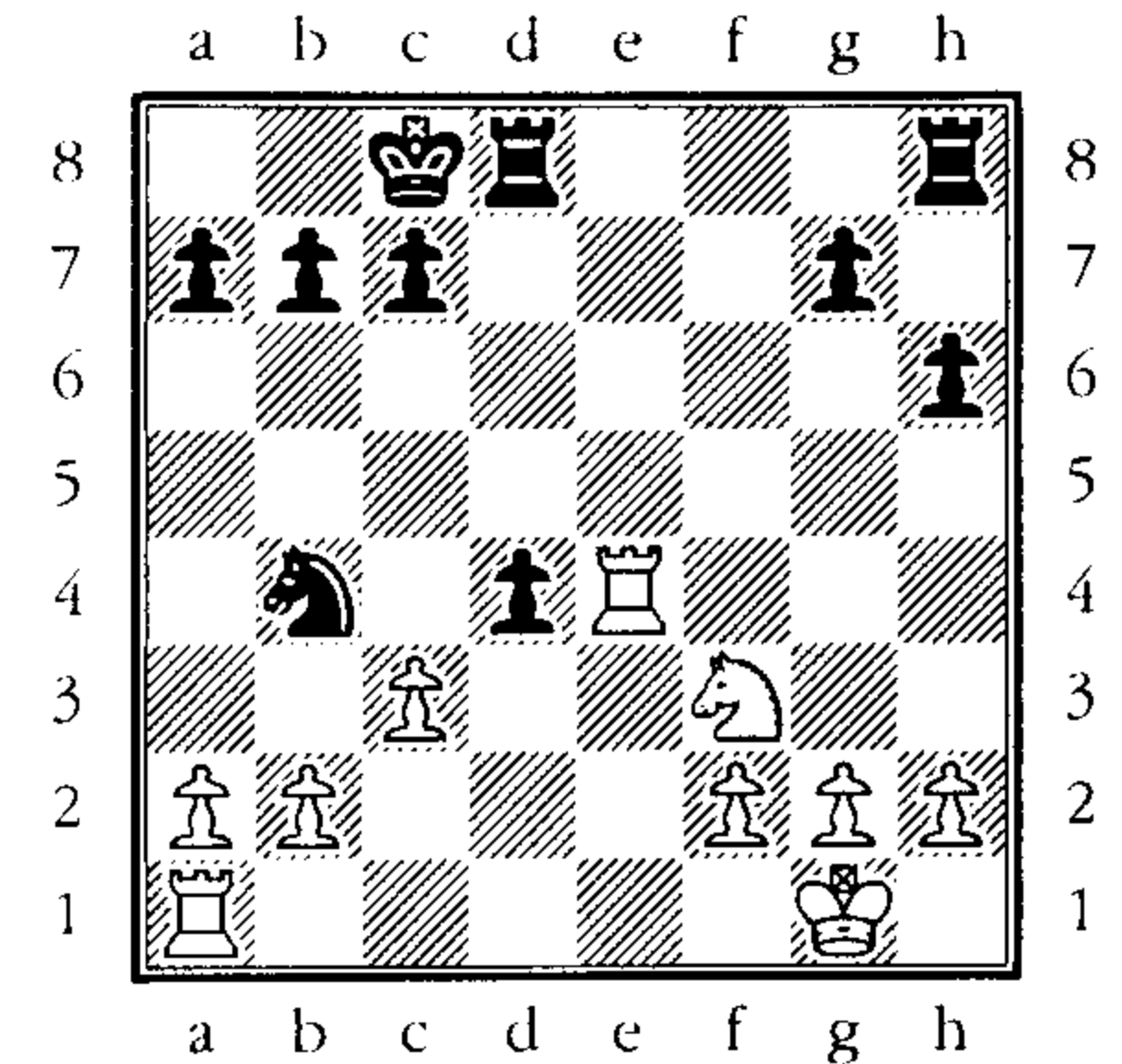
14... ♜xg2! 15 ♜xg2 ♖h5

This tactical miscalculation has left White with an inferior position which was enough for me to press on for a win in 36 moves.

9) Confidence and playing against a weaker/stronger player

Confidence falls under two categories, namely over-confidence and the lack of it. However, you must be careful as this might not be a reflection of a player's persona off the chess board or even his demeanour at the board and might be more closely compared to a person's character when placed behind the wheel of a car! The over-confident player is sometimes oblivious to what's going on outside his own 'little world' and misses some of the opponent's ideas, especially if they are of an aggressive nature. Nevertheless, because of his self-belief, he has the guts to follow the courage of his convictions and will often go for a 'quick kill'. The player lacking in confidence is likely to see what you are up to—although he may feel impotent to stop you unless he already has got his back to the wall!—and may prefer openings with slow build-ups so that he doesn't have to commit himself. He will also have a tendency to take the 'safe' option, especially if he thinks he can obtain a durable and lasting advantage as opposed to 'going for it' even when the position totally justifies such an approach. It might seem an over-generalisation to categorise players in these two ways and in reality most are probably somewhere in-between—in a grey area—even if they do lean one way or the other. There is little doubt that most very strong players have a very large ego—after all if they don't believe in themselves why should anybody else? Because of this they tend to be on the confident side. Let me illustrate:

White: Chris Baker
Black: Kristof Panczyk
Ron Bruce Memorial tournament,
Paignton



White has just played 18 c3

Before we proceed I'll tell you of the 'history' between us. Kristof is a strong Polish International Master and when we first played I managed to swindle him from a very grim position. Though he took it well and we became good friends I had no doubt that he would be seeking his revenge as soon as he got the chance to meet me again over the board (where you have no friends!).

The time for the re-match duly arrived and after a relatively tame opening line we reached the above position where I had just played 18 c3, anticipating further exchanges and a relatively quick draw. However Kristof had his own ideas on the subject!

18... dxc3?!

Played through over-confidence. The alternatives were:

a) 18... ♜c2!? 19 ♜c1! voluntarily allowing Black to push his pawn to the sixth rank! 19... d3 20 ♜d1 and

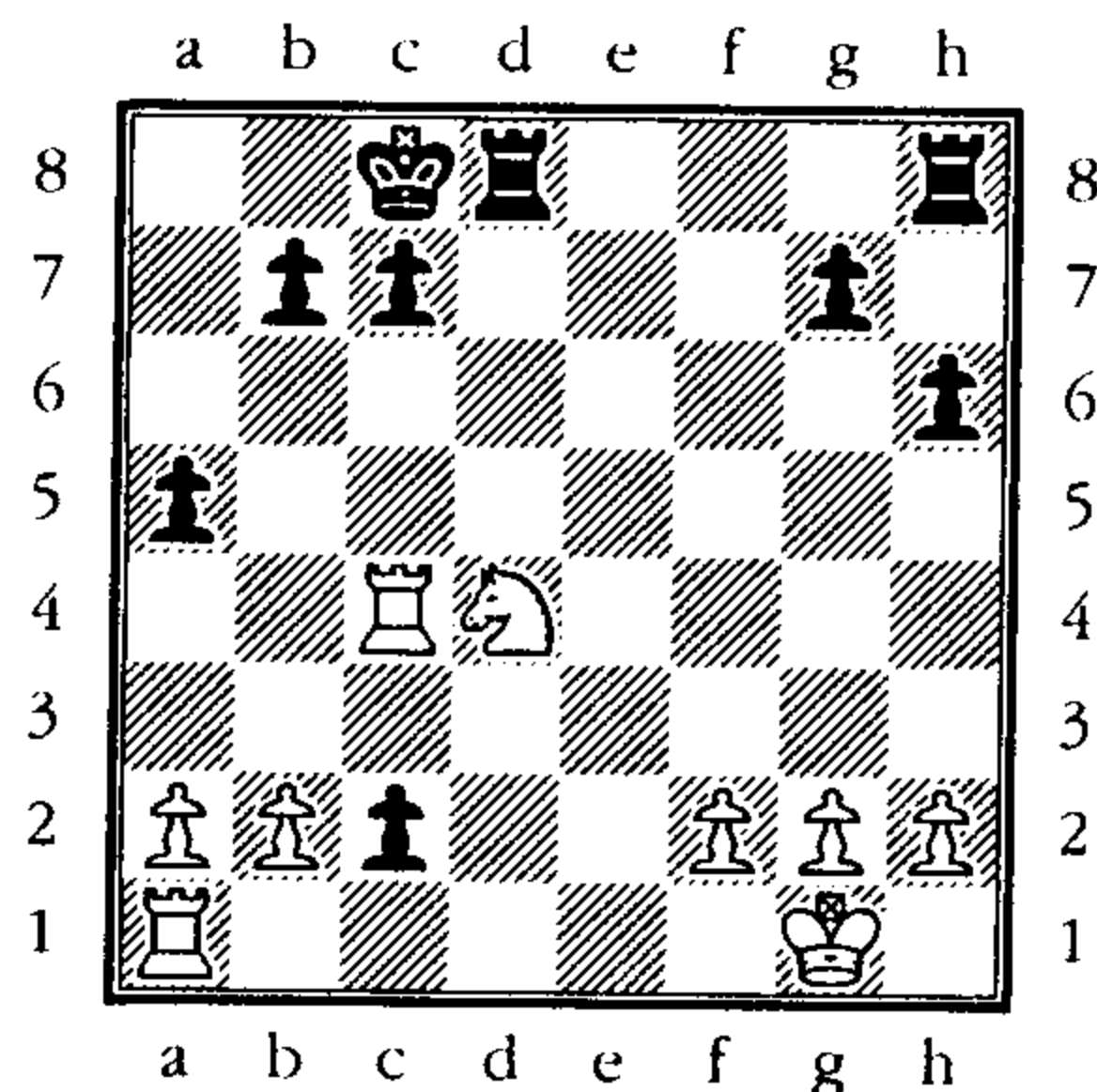
then blockading it... 20...♖hf8 21 ♗e7 and so long as he is careful White will retain a slight edge as Black's knight on c2 is stuck and his passed pawn shouldn't be too much of a problem.

b) 18...♗d3! 19 ♗xd4 ♗xb2 20 ♗ae1 ♗d7 when the position is balanced.

19 ♗xb4 c2 20 ♗d4! a5

After 20...c5 21 ♗c4 ♗xd4 22 ♗xc5+ ♗d7 23 ♗xc2 White is a sound pawn ahead although Black has good drawing prospects.

21 ♗c4



21...b5 22 ♗xc2 ♗xd4 23 ♗ae1 ♗d7 24 ♗c5 ♗e8

With the idea, given the chance, of doubling up on the seventh rank, whereas 24...♗hd8 25 ♗f1 would still leave Black with problems.

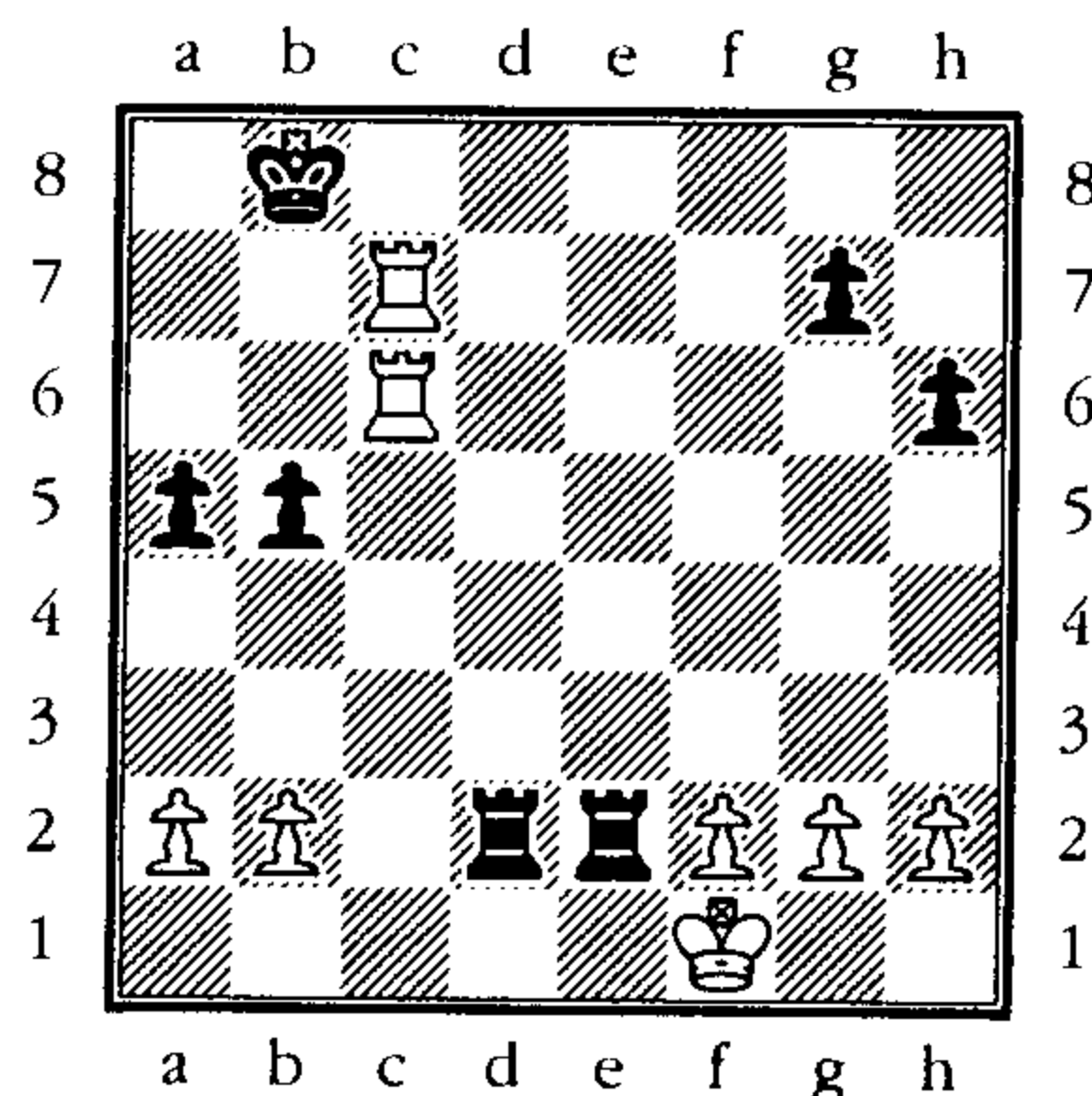
25 ♗f1 ♗d2

Black 'bites the bullet' and gives up his 'c'-pawn in the hope that he can generate enough counterplay with his rooks.

26 ♗xc7+ ♗b8 27 ♗7c2 ♗ee2 28 ♗c8+

Exchanging with 28 ♗xd2, followed by 28...♗xd2 29 ♗b1, leaves White with far too passive a position to have any realistic winning chances.

28...♗b7 29 ♗1c7+ ♗b6 30 ♗c6+ ♗b7 31 ♗8c7+ ♗b8



The sole purpose of White's checks was to make the black king feel 'uncomfortable' by forcing it to the back rank.

32 ♗xg7 ♗xf2+ 33 ♗g1 ♗f8

After 33...♗xb2 34 ♗b6+ ♗c8 (or 34...♗a8 35 ♗xh6 ♗f8 36 h4) 35 ♗xh6 ♗fd2 36 h4 Black has similar problems to the game.

34 h4 ♗xb2 35 ♗b6+ ♗c8 36 ♗a6 ♗b8 37 ♗xh6

The reason for ♗b6-a6 now becomes clear—if Black takes on a2 he will lose his 'b'-pawn to ♗h6-b6+.

37...a4 38 h5 ♗xa2 39 ♗b6+ ♗c8 40 h6 ♗a1+ 41 ♗h2 ♗f5 42 h7 ♗h5+ 43 ♗g3 ♗ah1 44 ♗c6+ ♗b8 45 ♗f6 ♗c1 46 ♗b6+ ♗c8 47 ♗xb5! ♗ch1 1-0

Black resigned without waiting to see 48 ♗xh5 ♗xh5 49 ♗g8+ and 50 h8=♗.

In the following game Black, having got through some early difficulties, won material and then expected to have everything his own way. His over-confidence was such that even when things started to turn sour he was still under the delusion that he was winning!

White: Bill Fenton
Black: Tony Pelling
Crawley Championship 1999
Hungarian Defence

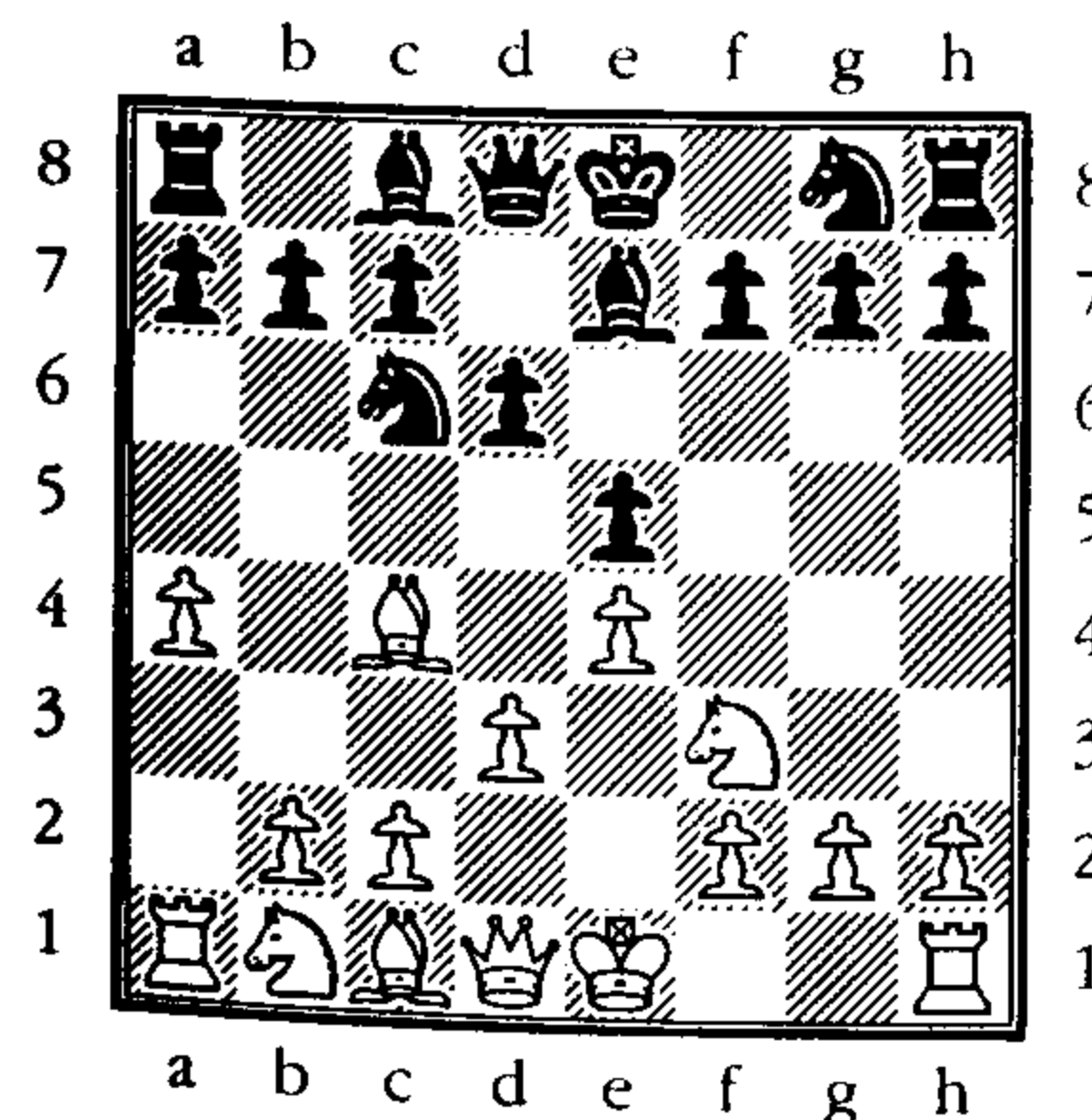
1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 ♗c6 3 ♗c4 ♗e7

Black chooses to play the Hungarian Defence which has the reputation of being very solid. On the 'plus' side Black avoids 3...♗f6 4 ♗g5 and with his move order he may have options of transposing back to an Italian game with a future ...♗g8-f6.

4 d3

A cautious but none the less sensible approach. White could also have played 4 0-0, 4 c3 as well as the aggressive 4 d4 or 4 ♗d5!? which is an attempt to exploit Black's move order.

4...d6 5 a4!?



An interesting move which has some useful points, namely if Black attempts to remove White's light-squared bishop from the a2-g8 diagonal by playing ...♗c6-a5 then White has the useful a2 square as a retreat. Also White pre-empts any ideas Black may have had of queenside expansion by means of the moves ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5.

5...♗f6 6 0-0

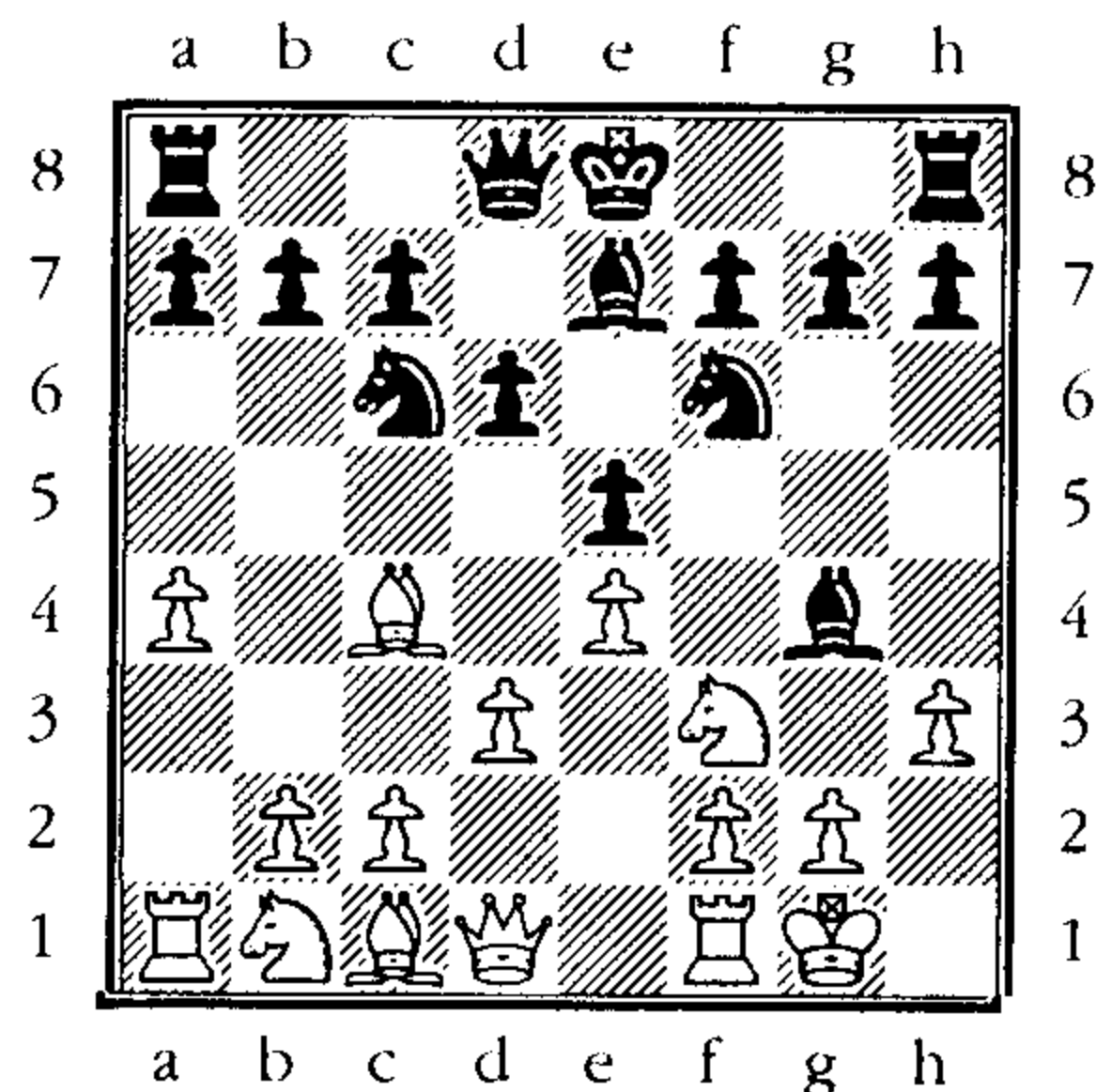
White should have seriously considered delaying castling until Black had committed his own king or made his intentions clear—therefore 6 c3 would have been a more logical alternative.

6...♗g4

The move 6...♗e6, opposing light-squared bishops, has its merits as Black would have little to fear from the exchange of bishops since the resulting doubled 'e' pawn would hardly be a source of weakness, in fact it would increase Black's control of the d5 and f5 squares and give Black the semi-open 'f' file to work on. White's best option in response to 6...♗e6 would have been 7 ♗c3 which (a) protects the pawn on e4 should Black exchange, (b) tightens White's grip on the d5 square and (c) helps to complete his minor piece development.

7 h3

This is a useful tempo-gaining move. Black doesn't want to concede the bishop pair and so has to remove his light-squared bishop from one of the c8-h3 and h5-d1 diagonals. As he has just moved his bishop to g4 and White's h2-h3 is hardly a weakness, the choice for Black is fairly straightforward.

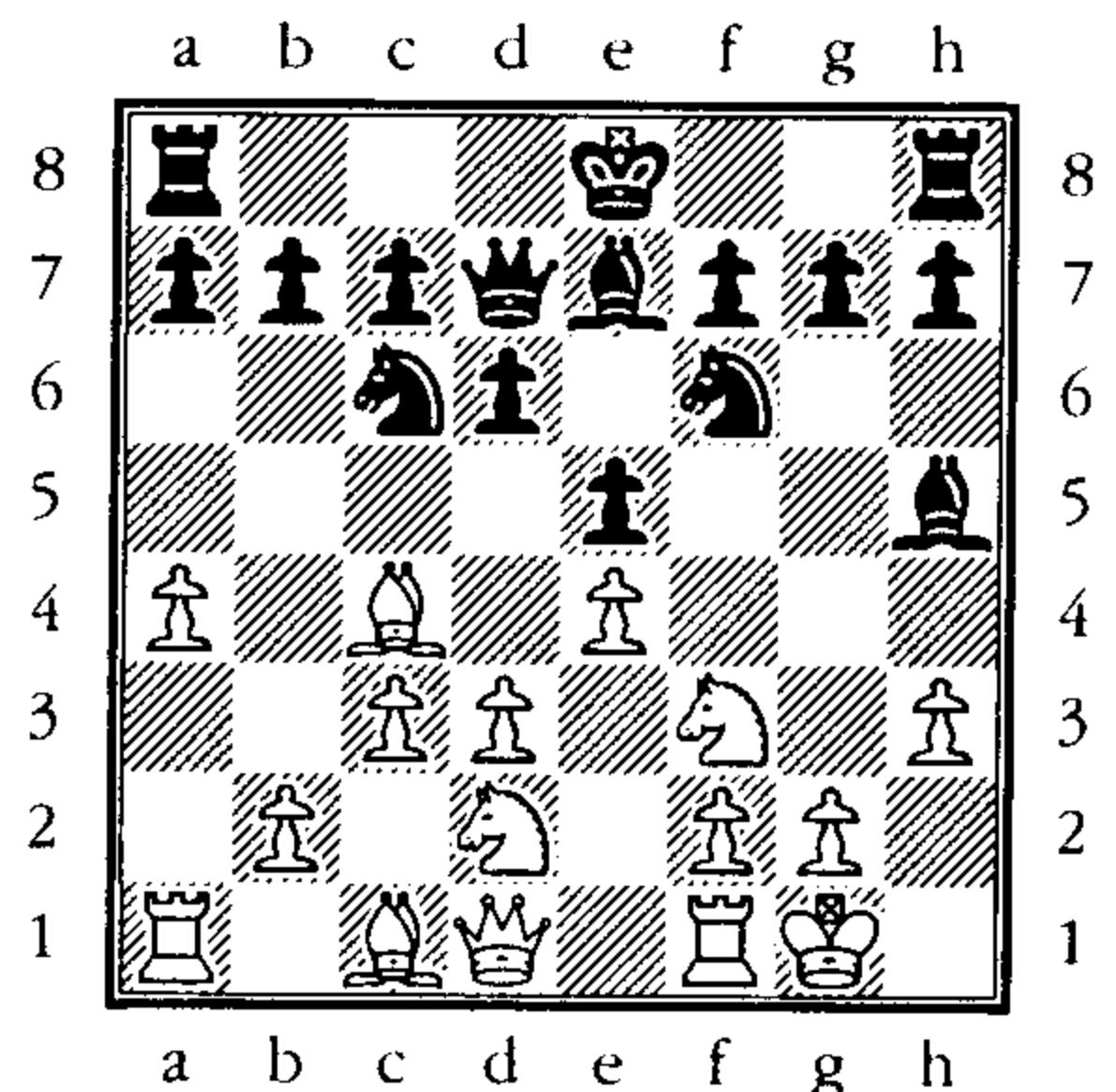


It is also interesting to note that had Black's dark-squared bishop been outside his pawn chain on c5 then Black could have considered playing ...h7-h5, offering a piece in return for kingside attacking chances. However, with his bishop on e7, he does not have enough activity to contemplate such an ambitious plan.

7...♗h5 8 ♖bd2 ♜d7

Black may have long castling long and a kingside attack on his mind but White's next move has the advantage of discouraging any such idea. Black may also be looking at the 'sac' on g4 should White incautiously play g2-g4.

9 c3



9...0-0

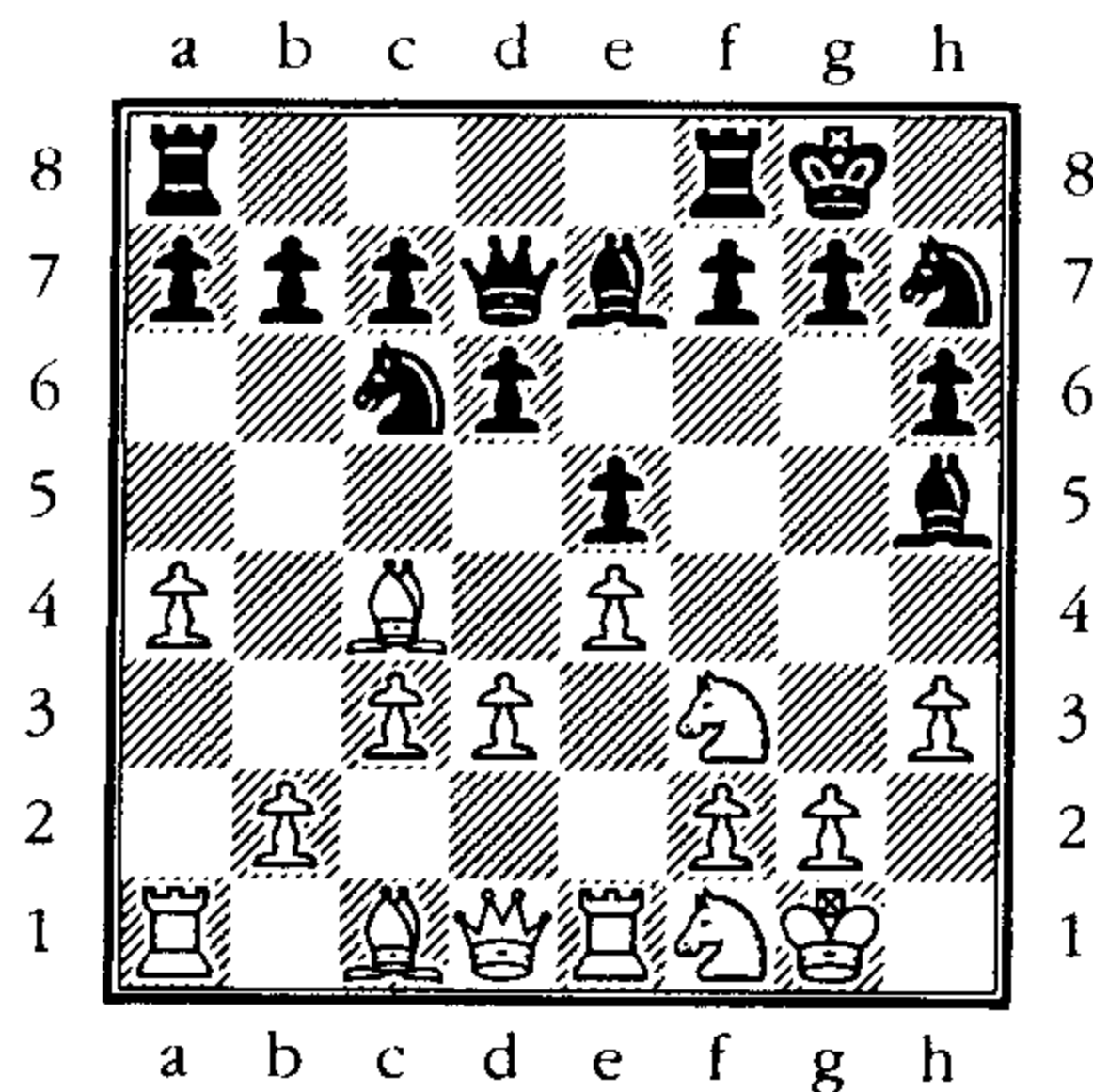
9...0-0 should have still come into consideration but after 10 a5! (on 10 b4, the central thrust 10...d5! in response to a wing attack, offers Black good counterchances.) 10...g5!? (after 10...d5 11 exd5 ♖xd5 12 a6! White has the better chances since Black must concede a light-square weakness on the queen-side.) 11 a6! b6 12 ♗b5 ♗xf3 13 ♖xf3 Black is powerless to stop ♜d1-a4 and ♗b5xc6.

10 ♗e1 h6 11 ♖f1!

A useful redeployment of the knight from d2. On g3 it will gain further time on Black's light-squared bishop while supporting White's plan of ♖f3-h4-f5.

11...♖h7?

A good concept, to contest the dark squares on the kingside, but unfortunately it leaves on a tactic...



12 ♖g3

...which White misses. With 12 ♖xe5! White would win a useful pawn since if Black takes the queen on d1 White can take on d7, and should Black capture on e5 then White regains the piece by taking on h5, thereby remaining a pawn to the good.

12...♗g6 13 ♖f1!?

13 d4, to occupy the centre, or 13 ♗e3, to complete development, seem more natural than this retrograde step of the knight.

13...♗h8

Unpinning the 'f' pawn with the idea of contesting the centre by an ...f7-f5 advance.

14 ♖e3 f6?

Very passive. Much more to the point would have been 14...f5! as after 15 exf5 ♗xf5 16 ♖xf5 ♜xf5 (16...♗xf5?! 17 d4! is better for White) Black's activity on the kingside adequately balances White's bishop pair.

15 ♖h4 ♗f7?

Strangely enough, Black probably had nothing better than...♗g6-e8.

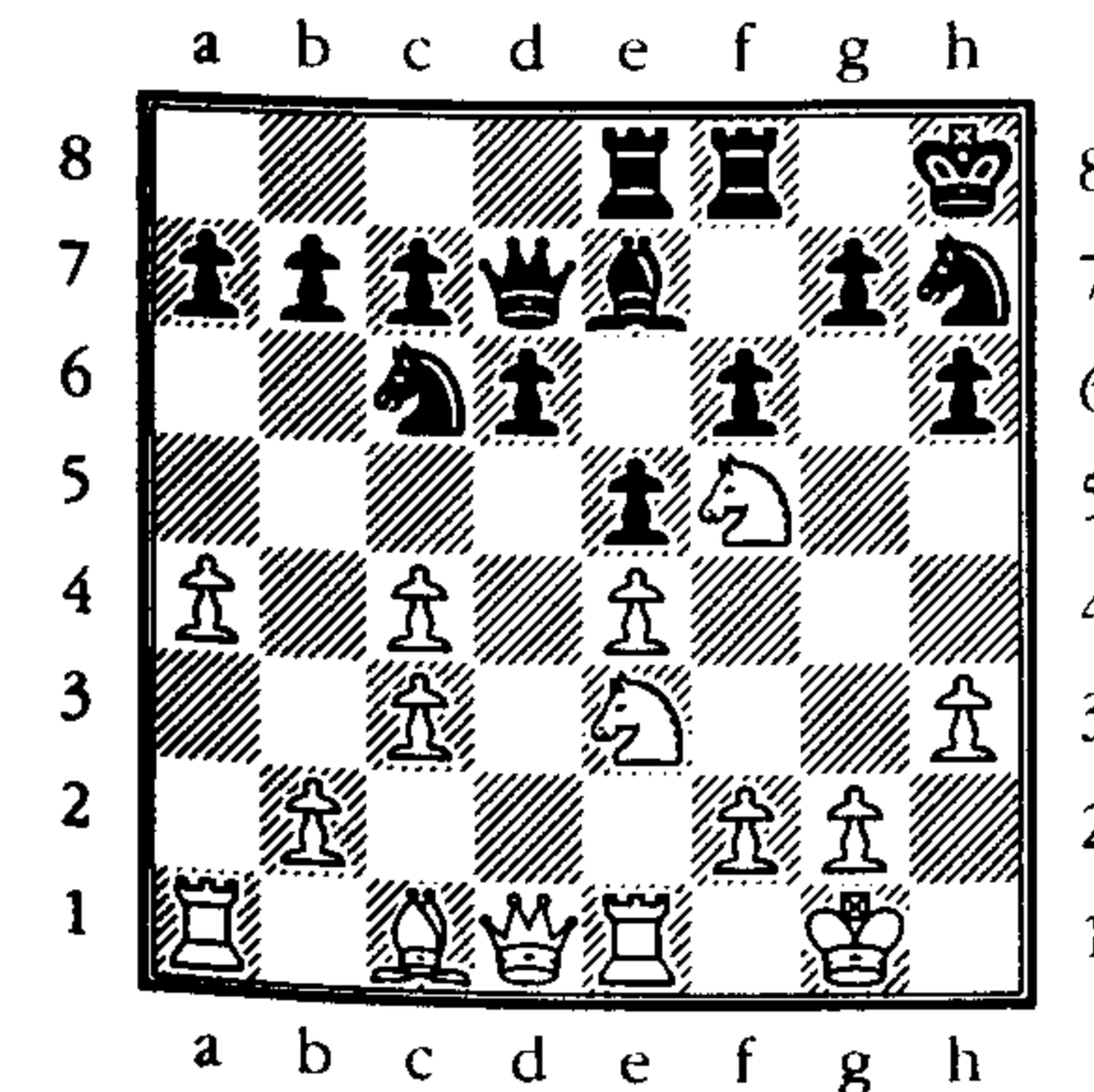
16 ♖hf5

16 ♗xf7! is very strong, i.e. 16...♗xf7 17 ♖g6+ ♗g8 18 ♜b3 ♖d8 19 ♖f5 ♗f8 20 d4 and White has a tremendous position thanks to his activity, extra space and superior placement of his pieces.

16...♗xc4 17 dxc4

A more imaginative recapture than the obvious ♖e3xc4.

17...♗ae8?



18 ♖d5

White misses a real shot with 18 ♜g4! as now:

a) 18...♖g5 19 h4! is very difficult for Black to meet, e.g. 19...g6 (19...♖e6? 20 ♖xg7! effectively ends the game.) 20 hxg5 gxf5 21 ♜h3! and Black can pack his bags.

b) 18...♗d8 19 ♖xh6! is a tactic that will win a useful pawn due to Black's queen being *en prise* on d7. After 19...♜xg4 20 ♖hxg4 White is not only a pawn ahead but has also managed to maintain his positional advantages.

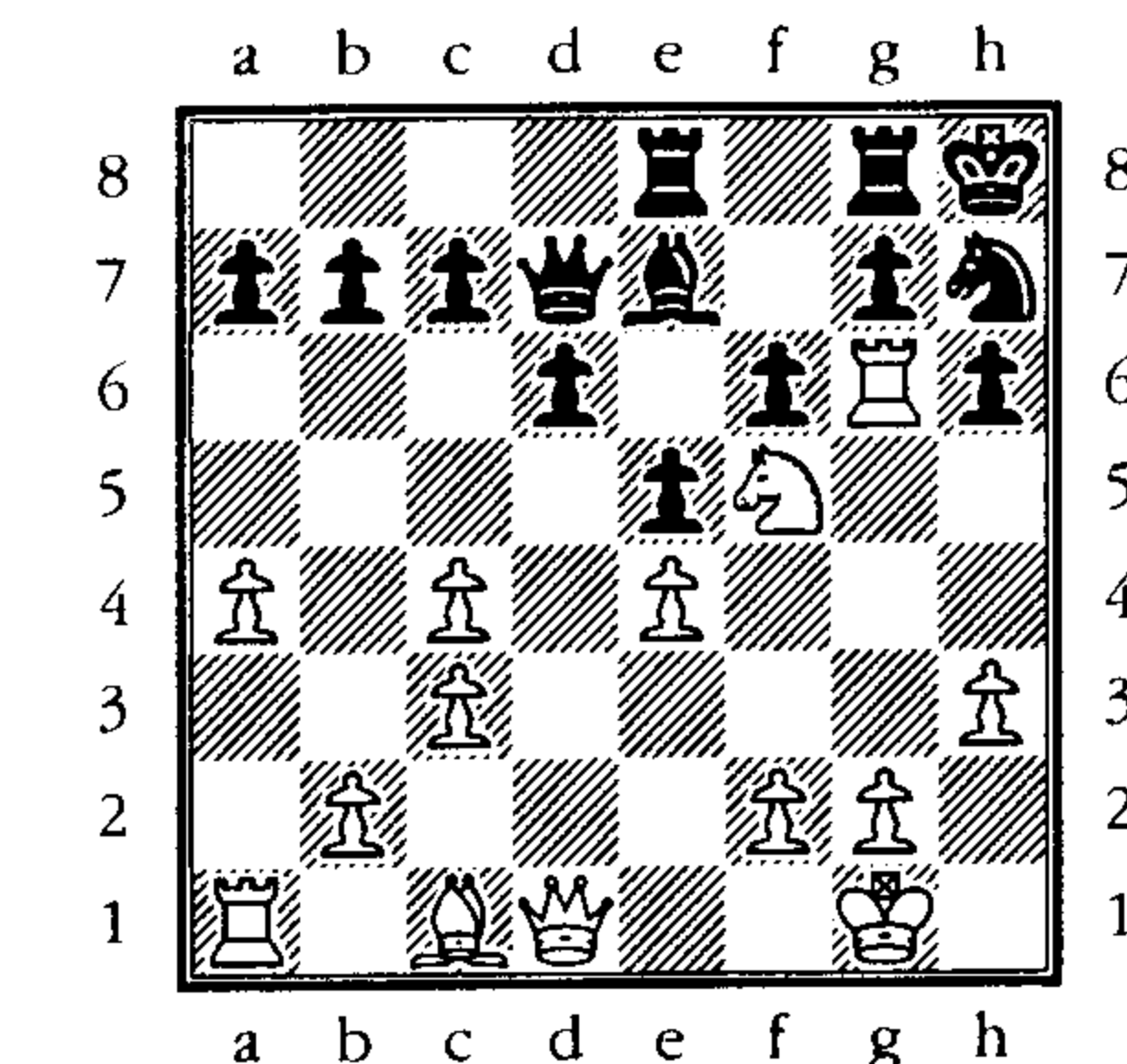
18...♗d8 19 ♗e3 ♖e7

19...♖g5, activating at least one of his minor pieces, would have been more to the point.

20 ♖dxe7 ♗xe7 21 ♗g3

21 ♖h4!, with the threat of ♖h4-g6+, is difficult for Black to meet as after 21...♗f7 22 ♜d5! White is hitting both f7 and b7.

21...♗g8 22 ♗g6



White tries to exploit Black's kingside light-square weaknesses. Alternatively White could have brought his queen into the game either by ♜d1-d5, threatening b7

and trying to infiltrate via f7, or by playing ♖d1-g4, putting pressure on g7.

22...♙f8

22...♘f8, attempting to force White to vacate the g6 square, leads to interesting possibilities after 23 ♘xh6! gxh6 (23...♘xg6 24 ♘f7+ ♔h7 25 ♖h5 mate) 24 ♙xh6+ ♔g7 25 ♖h5 when, to say the least, the position remains unclear, although White has the plan of ♙c1-d2, ♙a1-e1-e3-g3 which would cause all sorts of problems if in the meantime Black is unable to consolidate on the kingside.

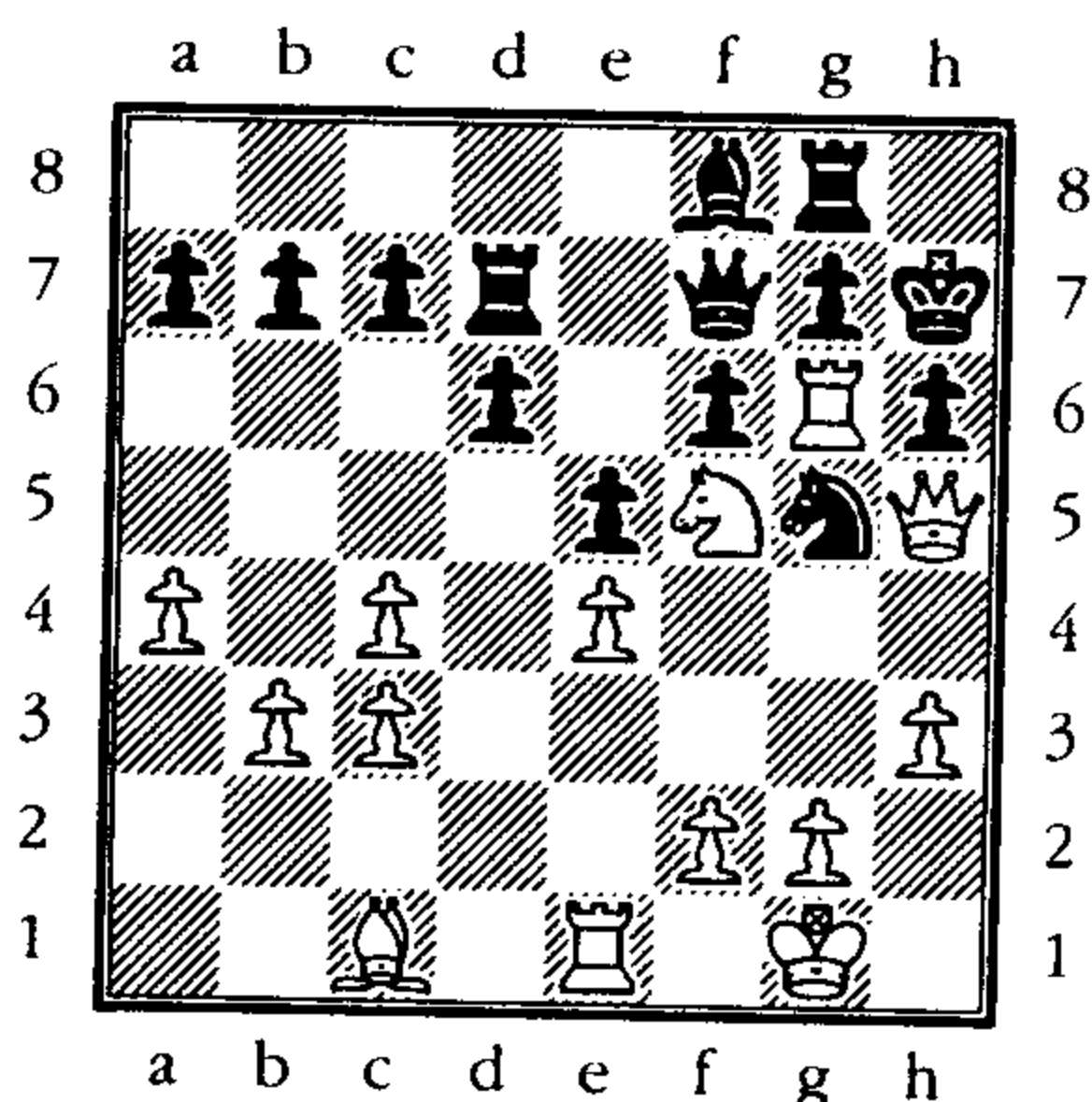
23 ♖h5 ♖f7 24 b3 ♙d8 25 ♙a3

Playing the bishop to e3 would have been more natural.

25...♘g5?? 26 ♙e1

Again White misses a tactic based on the fact that Black's queen is loose, i.e. 26 ♙xg5! as Black cannot regain the piece after 26...♖xh5 27 ♙xh5 g6 due to 28 ♘h6!.

26...♙d7 27 ♙c1 ♔h7



Having missed his chance, White has allowed Black back into the game. Now, rather than trying to force the issue, White should have regrouped with 28 ♘h4.

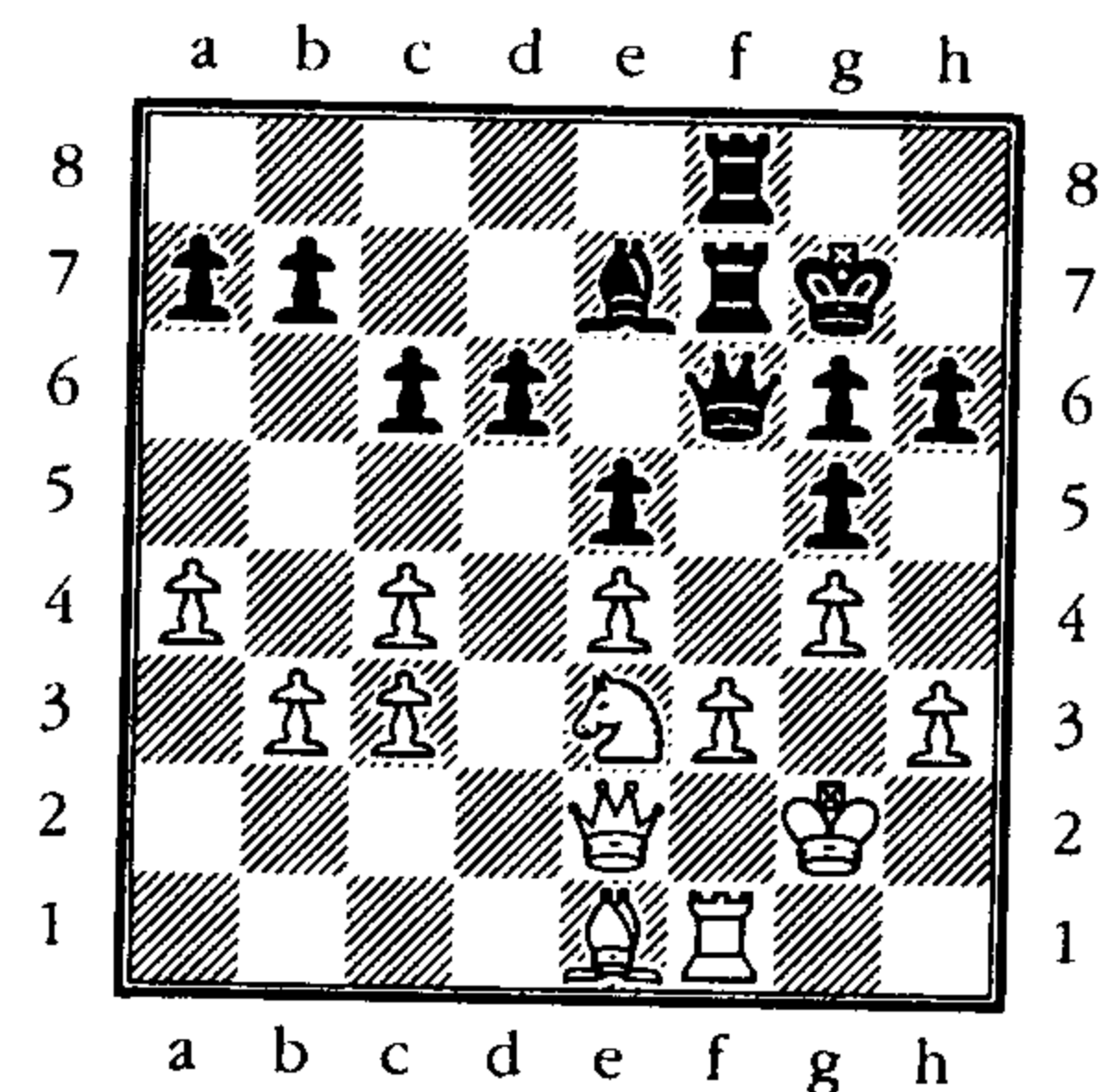
28 ♙xg5? fxg5 29 ♖g4 g6 30 ♘e3 ♙d8 31 ♘d5 c6 32 ♘e3

While having certain surprise value, 32 ♙xg5! doesn't offer White enough after 32...hxg5 33 ♖xg5 cxd5! (obvious and good) 34 ♖xd8 dxc4 35 bxc4 ♖xc4 and, with careful play, Black is winning.

32...♙e7 33 ♖e2 ♙df8 34 g4?

While it is a good idea to restrict Black's kingside and keep his dark-squared bishop inside the pawn chain, this does allow 34...♖f3! 35 ♖xf3 (35 ♖f1 ♙f4! 36 ♘d5!? cxd5! 37 ♙e3 ♙xg4+! 38 ♔h2 ♖f4+ 39 ♙g3 ♙xg3 40 ♙xf4 ♙xc3 41 ♙d2 ♙xb3 and Black has more than sufficient material for his queen) 35...♙xf3 36 ♔g2 ♙gf8! 37 ♘f5 ♙xc3! 38 ♘xe7 ♙e8 and, in regaining his piece, Black is very well placed due to the activity of his rook on c3.

34...♖e6 35 ♙f1 ♙f7 36 ♙d2 ♙gf8 37 ♔g2 ♔g7 38 ♙e1 ♙h8 39 ♙h1 ♖f6 40 f3 ♙hf8 41 ♙f1



Here the position was adjourned. White can take time out to accept the fact that he missed opportunities and had to readjust to the task at hand. Despite his material deficit

White's position remains solid and Black still has to find a plan to open up the position for his rooks in order to exploit his material advantage. In other words White doesn't need to give up (if you play the position as if it were clearly lost YOU WILL LOSE IT!) but should look for opportunities in case Black goes astray. The important thing for White now is to keep the position closed so that the black rooks remain fairly inactive and to ensure Black's dark-squared bishop stays out of the game. Furthermore if White can create an outpost on d5 he could even be better—the only thing he would then need to do is dislodge Black's pawn from c6—a difficult task but maybe not insurmountable.

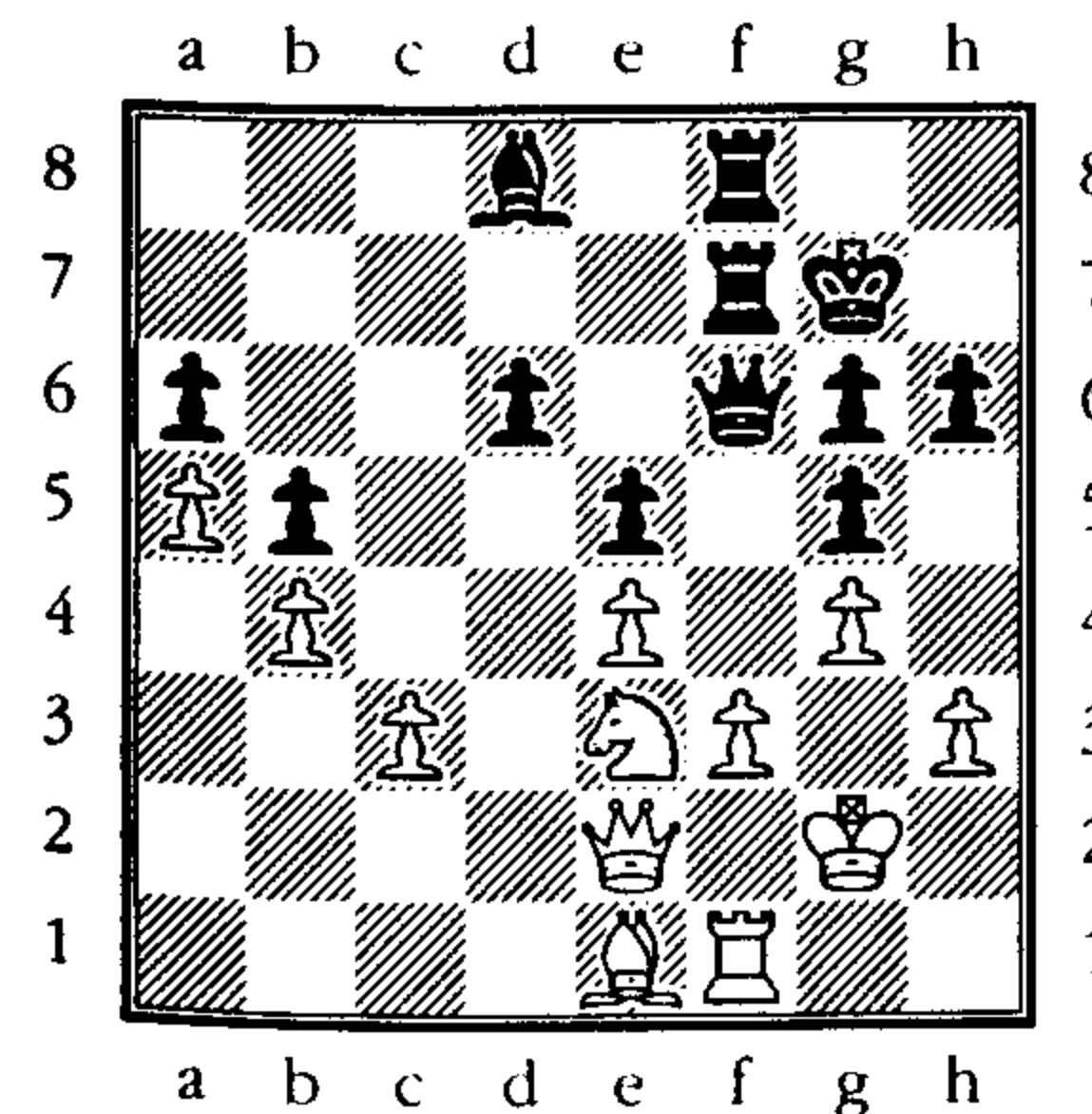
41...♙d8 42 b4 a6 43 a5!

Keeping Black's bishop out of the game.

43...b5?

This is bad as after the exchange of pawns Black must either allow White a strong passed pawn on a5 or concede the outpost on d5 that White's knight has been craving for...

44 cxb5 cxb5?!



The wrong decision, the lesser evil was 44...axb5.

45 ♘d5

The knight on d5 is now a monster of a piece which gives White the advantage despite his material deficit.

45...♖e6 46 ♙d2

White appears to be in no rush. If he wanted to 'force the issue' then 46 c4!?, to create a plus on the queenside, would be the right approach.

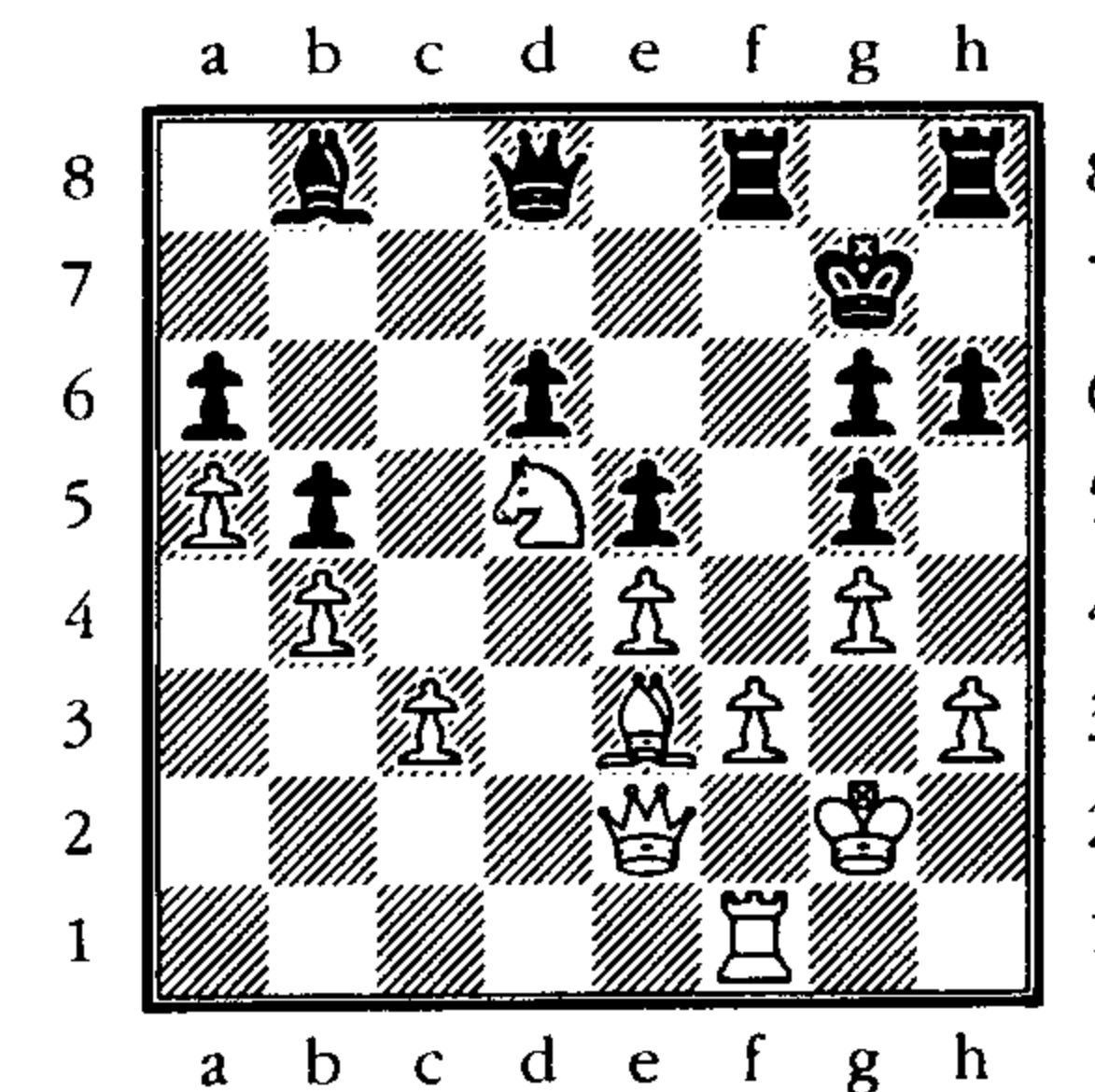
46...♖d7 47 ♙e1 ♖c6 48 ♙d2 ♙c7 49 ♖d3 ♙b8 50 ♙e1 ♙a7

The only 'movement' over the last few moves is that Black has improved his position by manoeuvring his bishop to a more useful diagonal.

51 ♙d2 ♖c8 52 ♖e2 ♖d8 53 ♙e1 ♙h8

Black has designs on playing ...h6-h5, whereas White has been doing little more than 'treading water'.

54 ♙d2 ♙ff8 55 ♙e3 ♙b8?

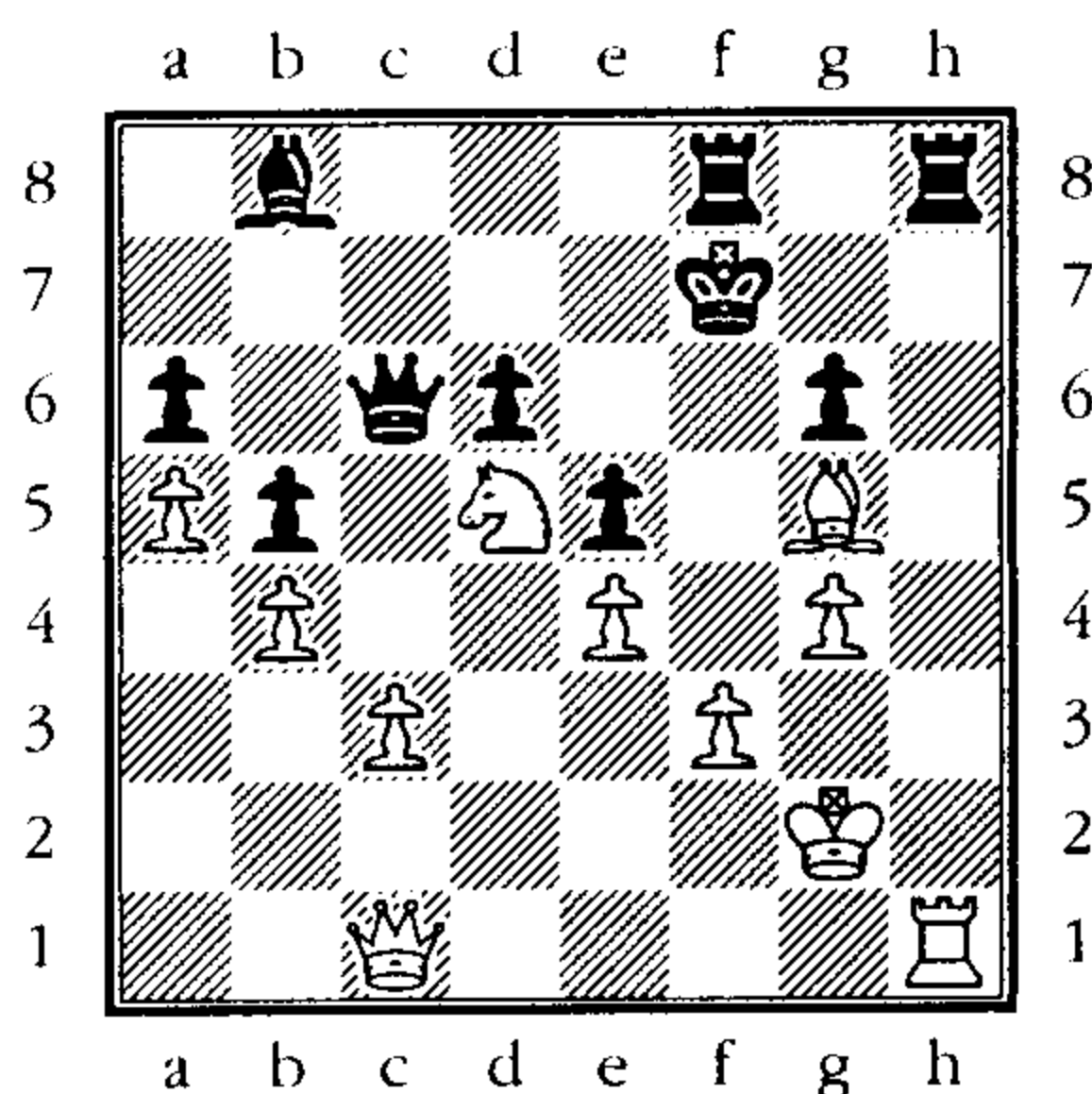


Reducing the bishop to such a passive role can hardly be right.

56 ♖d2 ♗d7 57 ♗c1 h5

Perhaps Black's decision to open up the kingside was based on the players' respective gradings rather than real positional justification. There is no doubt in my mind that had he been playing Kramnik, Black would have been more than happy to adopt a rather 'come and get me approach'.

58 ♙xg5 hxg4 59 hxg4 ♗c6 60 ♖h1 ♙f7



61 ♙h6

61 ♙f6, hitting h8 and with the idea of future control of the open 'h'-file, is more logical and should offer White the advantage. After 61 ♙h6 the game was again adjourned and White, in my view, made the serious psychological mistake of offering a draw! The reason why this is a poor time to offer a draw can be summed up as follows:

a) if Black is worse/losing then he can take a draw;

b) if Black is worse and White has sealed then he has the opportunity to see this 'secret move' before deciding whether or not to take up White's offer;

c) if Black has the equal/better chances then he is obviously not going to accept White's draw offer—so at the end of the day what has White got to gain by making such a proposal?

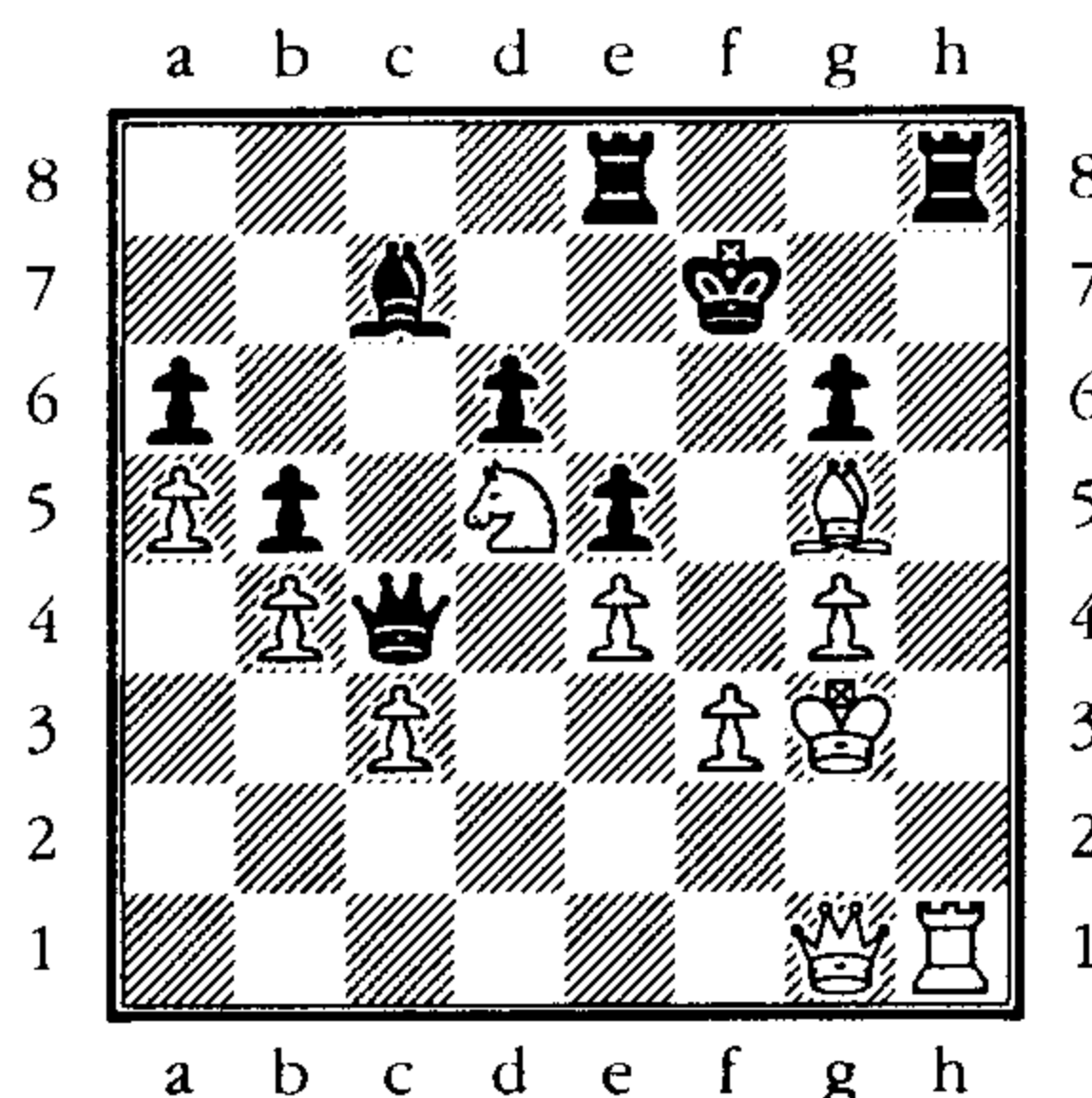
61...♖e8 62 ♗g1!

This move not only stops Black immediately activating his bishop along the a7-g1 diagonal but also threatens to infiltrate on the queenside with ♗g1-b6.

62...♙c7 63 ♙g5

Threatening ♙g5-f6 when Black will have to concede control of the 'h'-file. Should White then manage to get his queen to h7 Black's position will fall apart.

63...♗c4! 64 ♙g3!



Moving the king to a safe square prevents the black queen from entering White's kingside via e2 or a2 with check.

64...♙b8 65 ♙h6?!

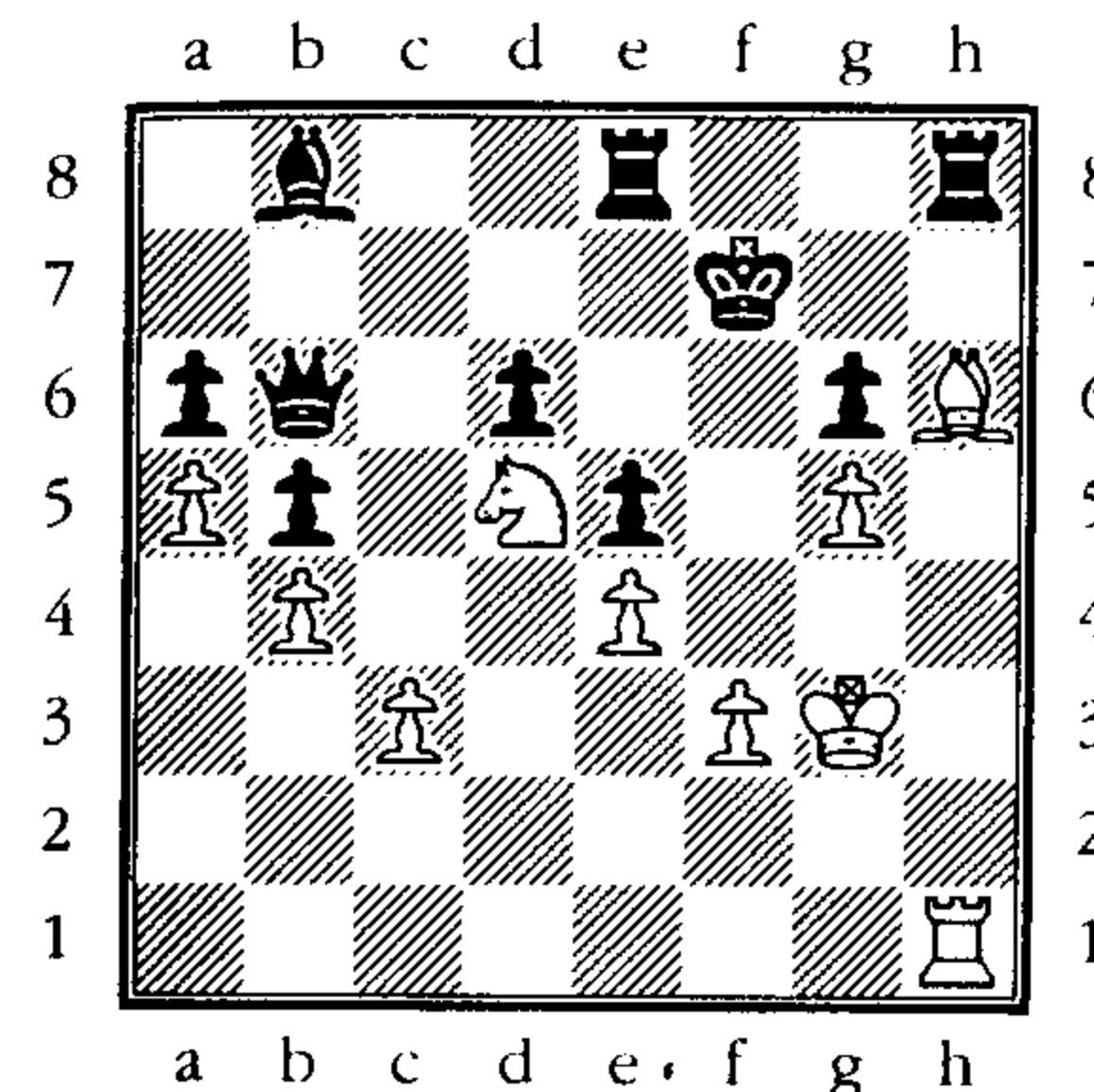
It was time for White to carry out his own plan of infiltration with 65 ♙f6 ♖xh1 (65...♖hf8 66 ♖h7+ ♙e6 67 ♗h1! ♖xf6 68 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 69 g5+ ♙xg5 70 ♗h4 mate) 66 ♗xh1

♙e6 67 ♗h3! g5 68 ♗h7 with the fatal threat of ♗h7-f5+.

65...♗c8 66 g5

This is a double-edged decision in that it limits the scope of Black's rook but at the same time also locks in White's bishop on h6.

66...♗b7 67 ♗b6! ♗xb6?



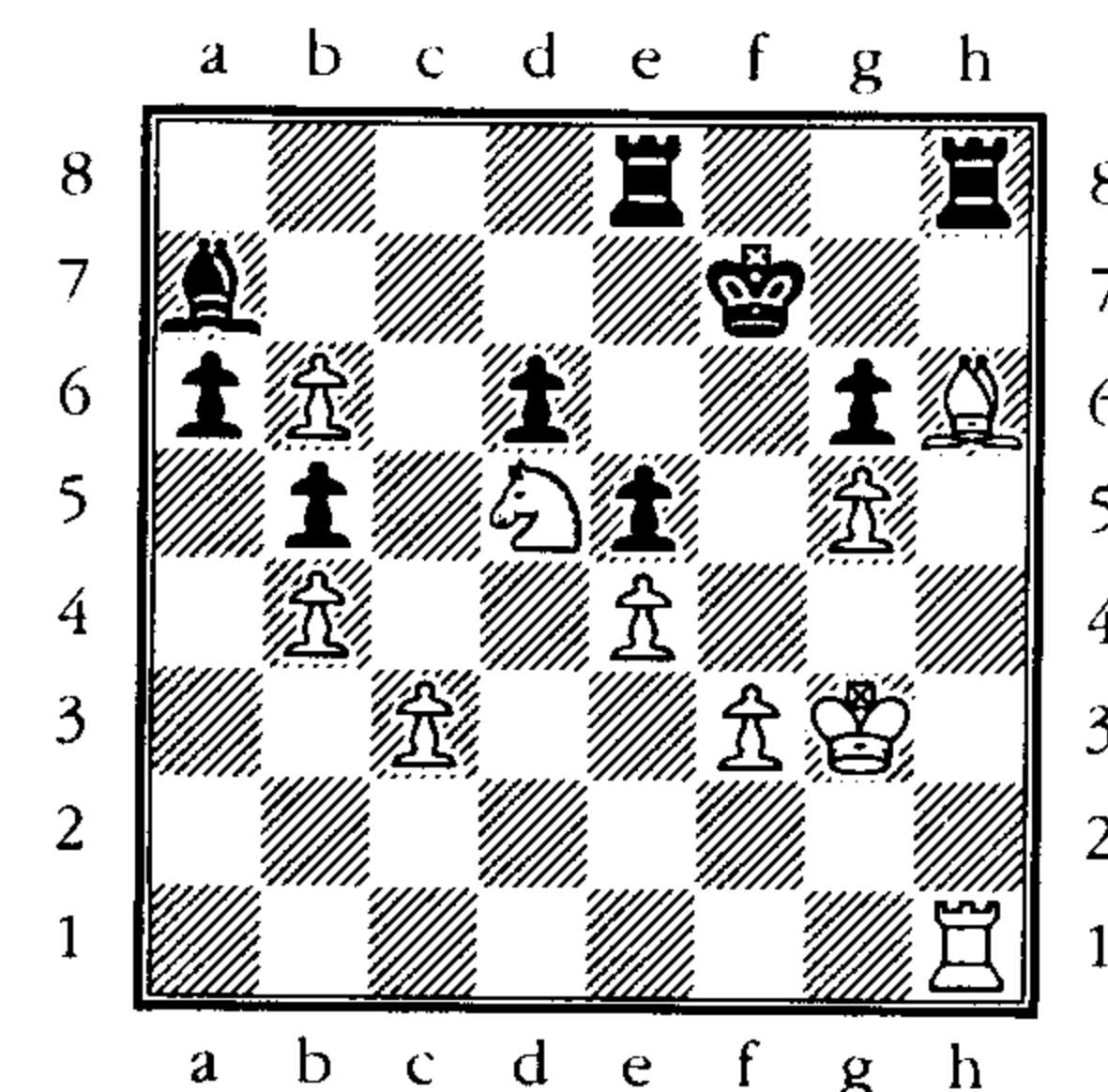
As the game continuation shows, Black needed to avoid the exchange of queens on b6. Instead he should have retreated with ...♗b7-c8 as White still has to find a 'way in' to the black position.

68 axb6

Black's bishop is stone cold dead and the white knight which has been on d5 for over 20 moves remains a huge thorn in his side. White now has the straightforward plan of ♖h1-a1xa6-a5xb5 after which his queenside pawns will soon roll on through.

68...♙a7?

A clever concept or a sign of real desperation? I'll let you be the judge of that!



69 bxa7

It must have been really tempting to carry on with ♖a1!

69...♖a8 70 ♖f1!

A logical follow-up to his previous play. White plans to activate his rook by opening up the 'f'-file—a file which Black cannot easily contest due to the fact that White's bishop covers the f8 square.

70...♖xa7 71 f4 exf4+

71...♙e6 is a slightly more tenacious defence, based on the fact that White cannot play f4-f5+ as after ...g6xf5 he is unable to recapture with the pawn because then his knight would be hanging on d5.

72 ♖xf4+ ♙e8 73 ♖f6

Hitting both d6 and g6.

73...a5 74 bxa5 ♖xa5 75 ♖xd6 ♖h7??

A final blunder but Black's back was against the wall anyway. The text move just speeds up the process.

76 ♙f6+ 1-0

There is always a temptation, particularly during a weekend tournament and especially when playing Black, for the 'stronger' player to take unnecessary risks and chances, which often leads to their own downfall and a shock result. Experience has showed me that it is better to let the 'weaker' player 'shoot themselves in the foot' rather than try to force the issue. Sometimes this approach leads to a tame game or a draw with someone you should beat but often the opponent just crumbles under the pressure. The following game shows what happens when the 'stronger' player met an insipid line as Black:

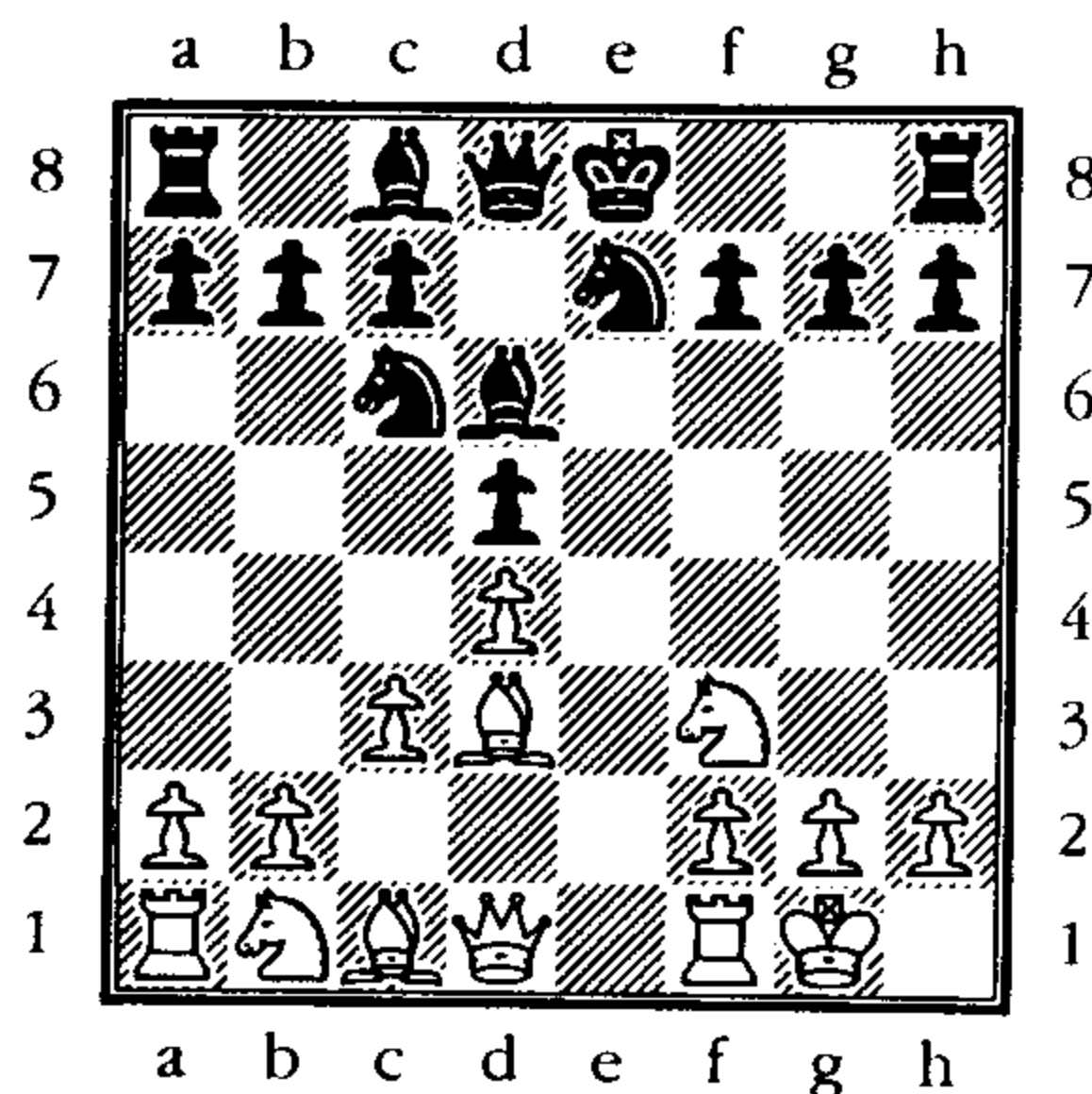
*White: Melanie Buckley
Black: Alex Easton
Bristol League Open 1997
French Defence*

As a side note it should be pointed out that this game was played in the fourth round, which could be relevant as, being a five round tournament, the players were gearing themselves up for the last round pairings. Another important point here is that you should always 'get on with the business at hand' and not even consider who you may play in the last round nor even begin to think about opening preparation for that game. All that does is distract you from the task at hand, moreover other results often don't go quite the way you expected and you end up playing somebody different. I'm sorry to paint Melanie as the 'rabbit' here as she is now a very accomplished player in her own right but at the time I think she would have been the first to admit that here she was up against a 'stronger' player.

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5

The exchange French has, justifiably, got the reputation of being rather tame. However at the time of this game a young Melanie Buckley decided to choose an opening line which was likely to 'get her safely out of the opening'. However, despite its modest beginning, the game surprisingly livens up quite quickly.

3...exd5 4 ♖d3 ♘c6 5 c3 ♖d6 6 ♗f3 ♗ge7 7 0-0



7...♖g4

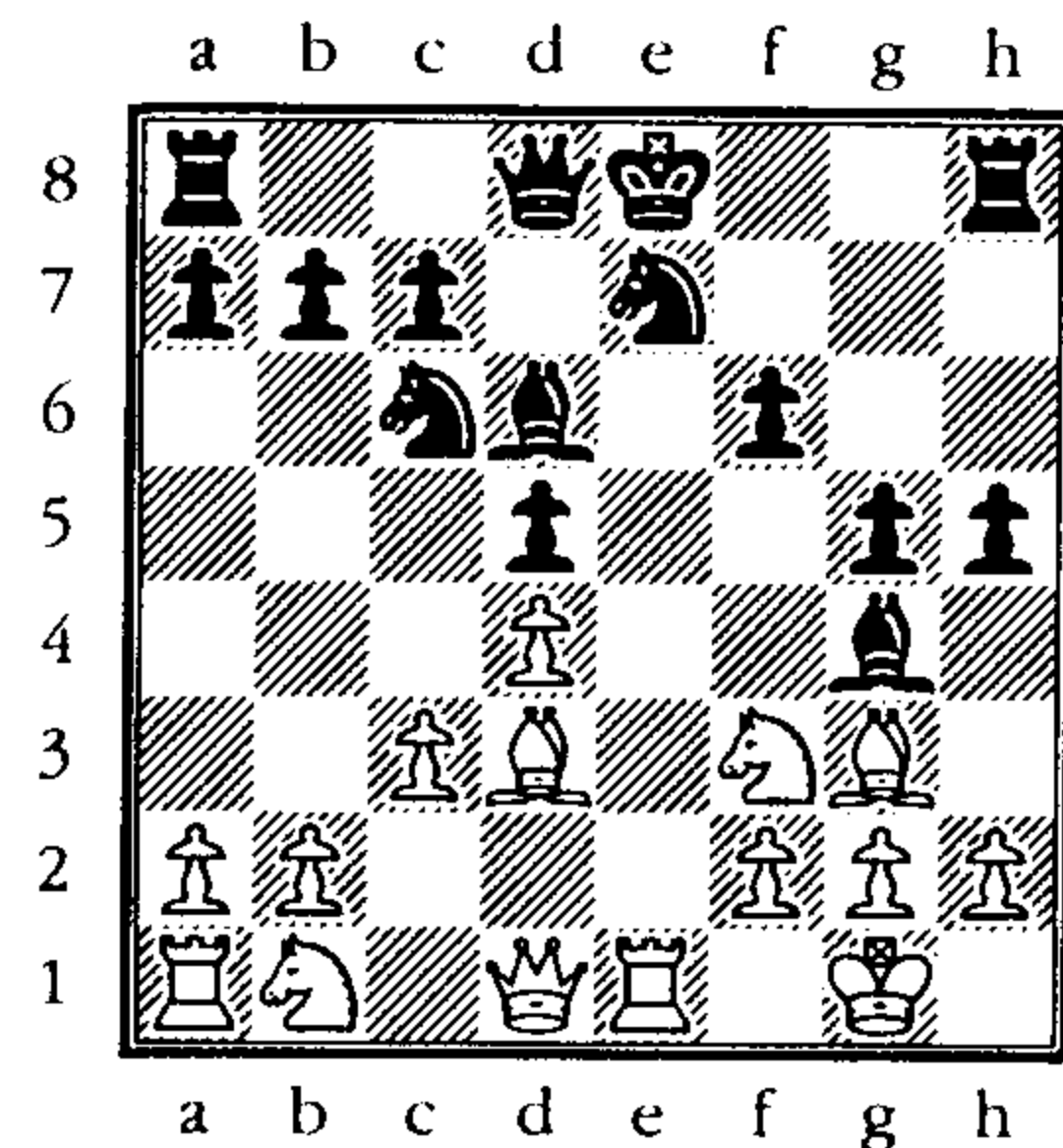
Black can aim for total equality with 7...0-0 8 ♖e1 (8 ♖xh7+? ♗xh7 9 ♗g5+ ♖g8 10 ♗h5 ♖f5! covering the vital h7 square) 8...♖f5, aiming to swap off White's better bishop. However Black would still like to 'mix it' on the grounds that you don't win five round weekend tournaments with too many quick draws—and at the time Alex must have regarded Melanie as a potential victim.

8 ♖g5 f6 9 ♖h4 g5 10 ♖g3 h5

So Black plans a kingside assault but he must at some time find sanctuary for his own king—obviously that would be on the queenside

where White will have designs of her own, initiated by the pawn advances b2-b4 and a2-a4.

11 ♖e1



11...h4

Perhaps the time was right for 11...♖xg3 when after 12 fxg3! (12 hxg3 h4! really starts to get things going) 12...♗d6 13 ♗a3! 0-0-0 the position is unbalanced.

12 ♖xd6 ♗xd6 13 b4

13 ♖g6+!? is tempting so as to displace the black king, even at the cost of a tempo, while 13 h3 ♖d7 14 ♗a3 g4! 15 ♗b5 ♗f4 16 ♗d2! ♗xd2 17 ♗xd2 0-0-0 leaves Black without any serious problems.

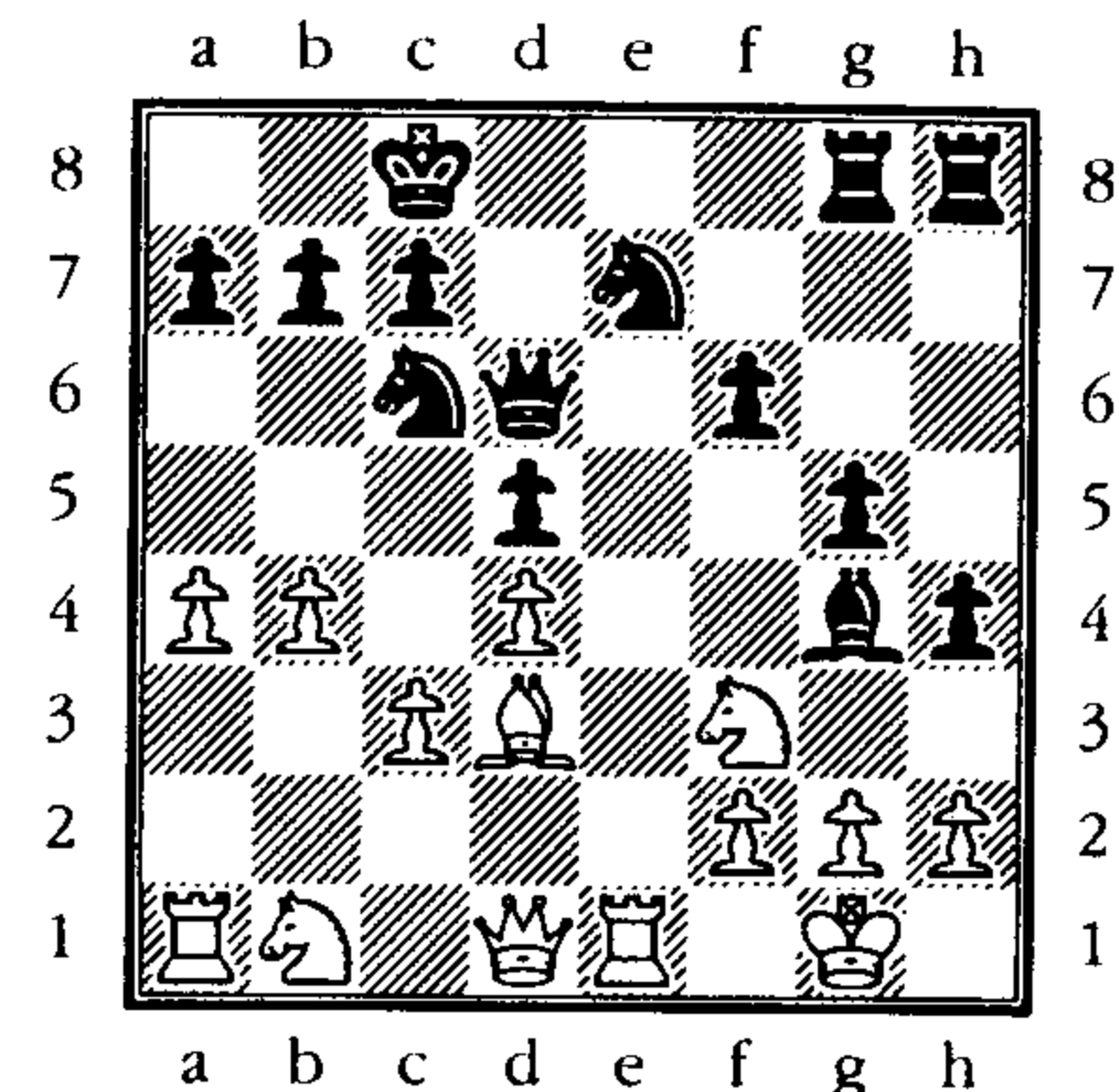
13...0-0-0

13...h3 is the type of move that is difficult to judge—on the one hand it will 'seal up' the kingside pawn structure which Black doesn't really want to do, while on the other, after g2-g3, White will be saddled with some permanent kingside light-squared weaknesses.

14 a4

A stab in the right direction!

14...♖dg8



Both players have played 'thematically' by advancing on the side where their opponent's king has tried to find shelter.

15 a5 ♖g7 16 ♗bd2

It must have been tempting to try to force the issue with 16 b5 ♗d8 17 b6 but after 17...a6 (17...cxb6?! 18 axb6 ♗xb6 19 ♗bd2 leaves White far too much potential play on the queenside) 18 bxc7 ♗xc7 it is not clear how White can make further inroads.

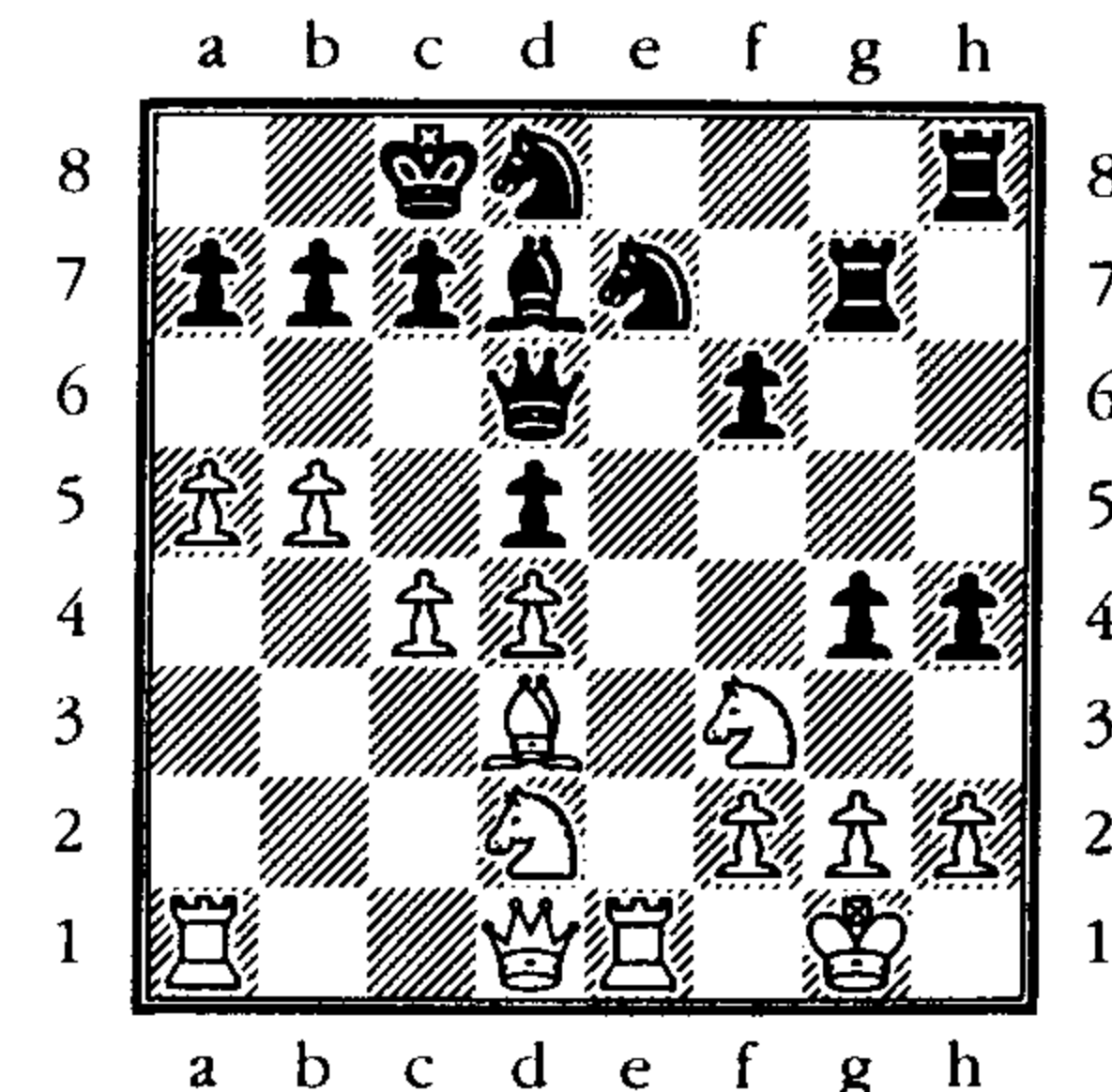
16...♖d7

Making way for...g5-g4.

17 b5 ♗d8 18 c4

18 b6 was also still a possibility.

18...g4



19 c5

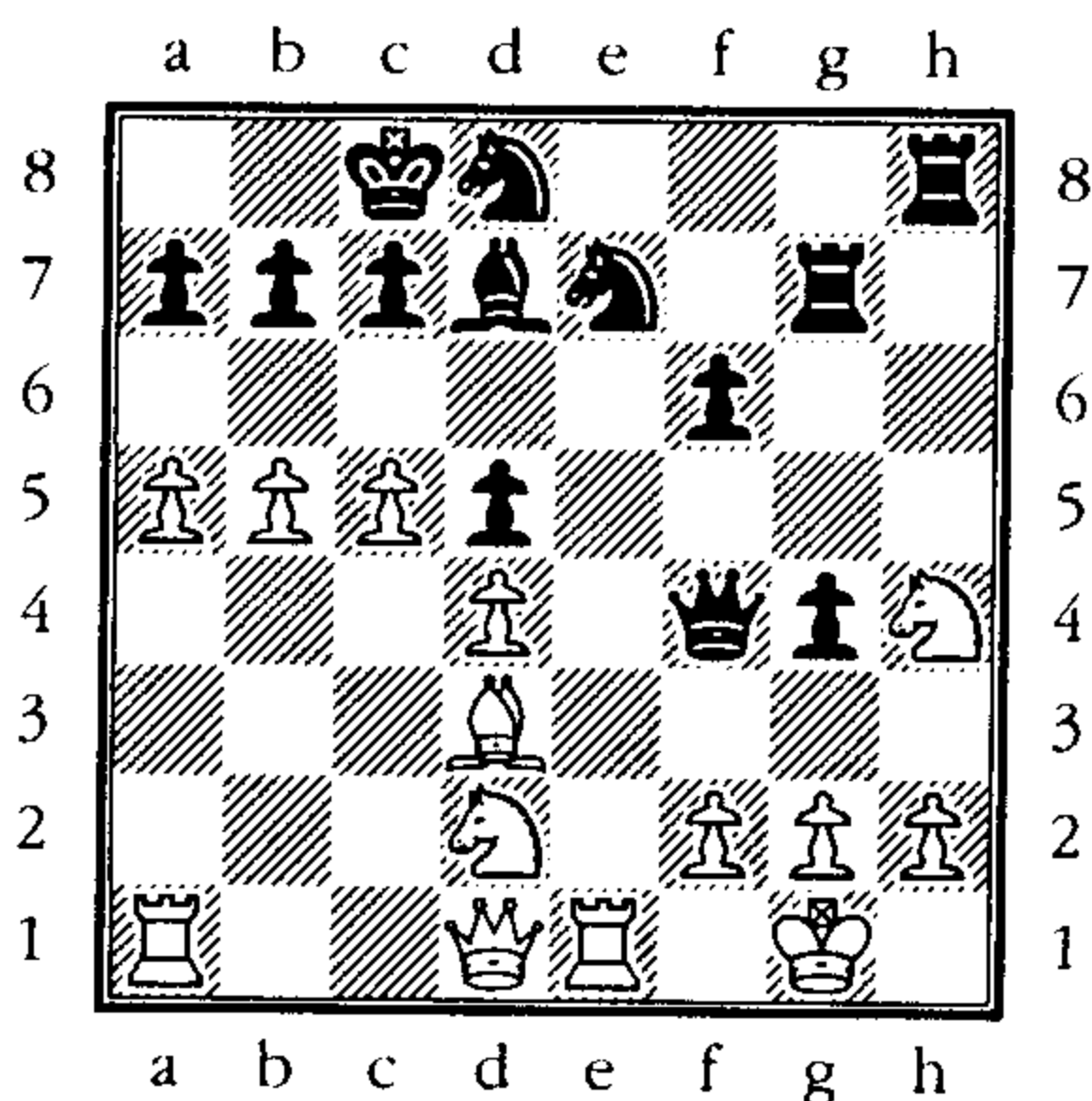
19 ♖xh4!? would have led to interesting play, i.e.

a) 19...dxc4 20 ♖xc4 ♗xd4 21 g3 (21 ♜xe7!? ♜xe7 22 ♖g6 ♜ee8 23 ♖xh8 ♜xh8 24 b6! and White's position is preferable) 21...♖e6 22 ♜e4 ♗c5 23 ♜c1! ♗g5 (23...♗xb5?? 24 ♖d6+) 24 b6 when White's play seems to be growing in momentum.

b) 19...♜xh4 20 g3 (threatening c4-c5, trapping the black queen!) 20...dxc4 21 ♖xc4 ♗xd4 22 ♜e4! ♗c5 23 g3 and Black has excellent compensation for the material, e.g. 24 ♖e3 f5 25 ♜ea4 gxh2+ 26 ♖xf2 f4 27 ♜xf4 ♖d5 when White cannot counter all of the oncoming threats.

19...♗f4 20 ♖xh4

20 b6, with the clever idea of meeting 20...gxf3 with 21 bxa7, fails to 21...♜xg2+ 22 ♖f1 ♜g1+! 23 ♖xg1 ♗g4+ 24 ♖h1 ♗g2 mate.



20...♗h6

Other choices were:

a) 20...♜xh4 21 g3 ♗xd4 22 ♖b3! ♗b4 23 b6! (threatening

b6xa7 when the 'a'-pawn cannot be stopped from queening) 23...axb6 24 a6 bxa6 25 ♜xa6+ ♖b8 26 gxh4 with an edge for White although Black's pieces could soon be activated.

b) 20...♗xd4 leads to interesting possibilities after 21 ♖b3 ♗b4 22 b6! ♖dc6 23 ♜xe7! ♜xe7 24 ♖g6 ♜eh7 25 ♖xh8 ♜xh8 26 a6! ♗f4! 27 g3 ♗h6 28 axb7+ and now:

b1) 28...♖xb7 29 ♜a6+ ♖a8 30 h4! (30 ♗xd5? ♗xh2+ 31 ♖f1 ♗h1+ 32 ♗xh1 ♜xh1+ 33 ♖e2 ♜xa1 34 b7+ ♖b8 35 ♖xa1 ♖b4) 30...gxh3 31 ♜b5! h2+ 32 ♖h1 and Black's position will fall apart.

b2) 28...♖b8 29 h4! gxh3 30 ♜b5 h2+ 31 ♖h1 and White's attack will break through.

21 g3

It is now difficult for Black to break through on the kingside, while White's potential threats against Black's queenside remain menacing.

21...f5 22 ♖f1

22 b6!?

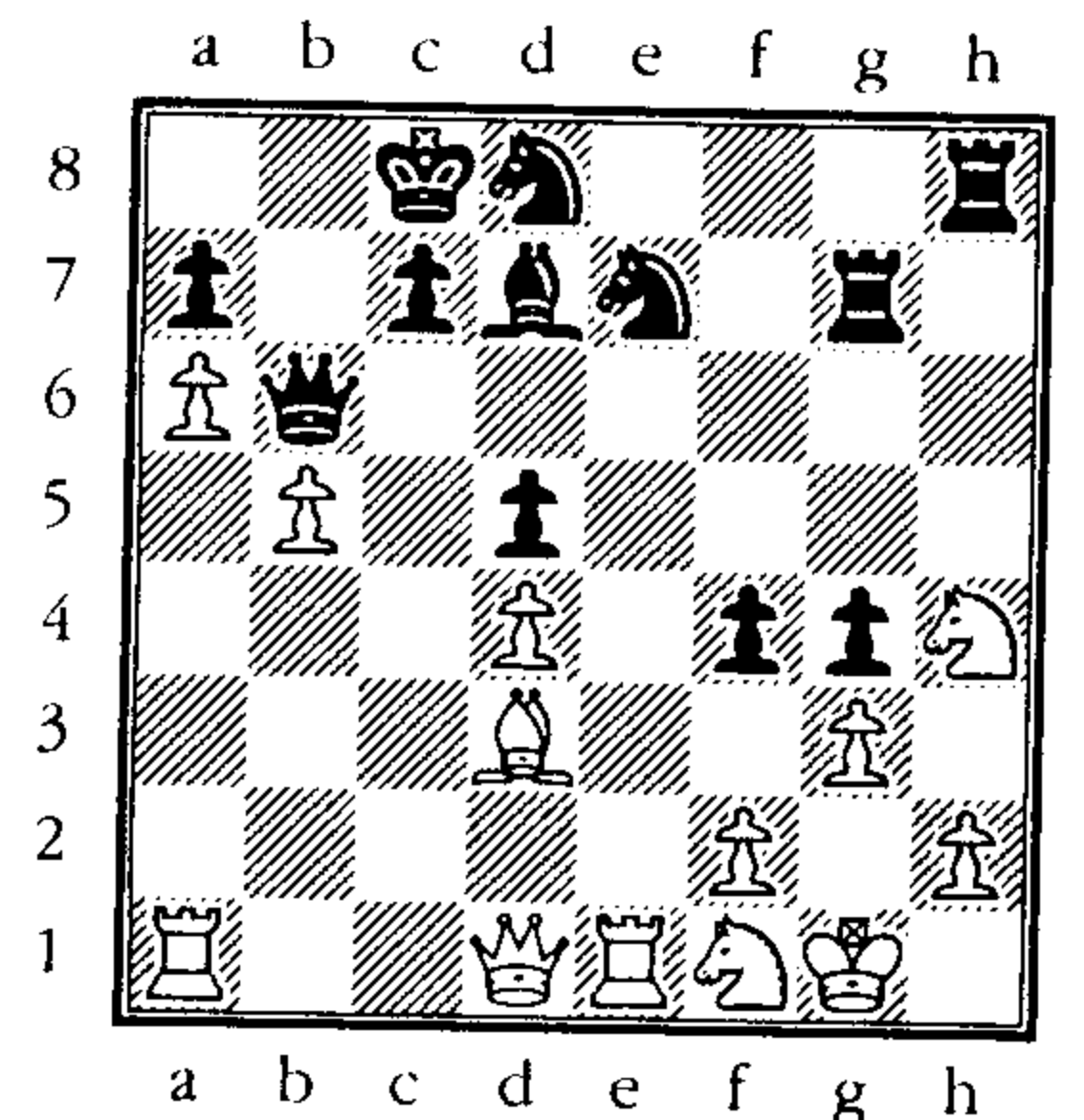
22...f4 23 a6!

White now chooses the 'correct' way to advance.

23...b6 24 cxb6?!

The problem with the text is that it takes the tension out of the position without producing a convincing continuation. Better was 24 ♗c2, with the idea of meeting 24...♖b8 by 25 ♜a1 f3 26 hxg3 ♜f7 27 ♜e5, taking control of the position.

24...♗xb6



25 ♗e2

Again critical is the temporary exchange sacrifice to swap pieces i.e. 25 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 26 ♖g6 ♜ee8 27 ♖xh8 ♜xh8 28 gxf4 (this capture is not as stupid as it first looks!) 28...♗f6 (28...♗xd4 29 ♜f5!) 29 ♗b3 and now 29...♗xd4 30 ♜a4! ♗c5 31 ♖e3 ♜h3 32 ♜f1 ♜h5 33 ♗d1 with the better chances for White.

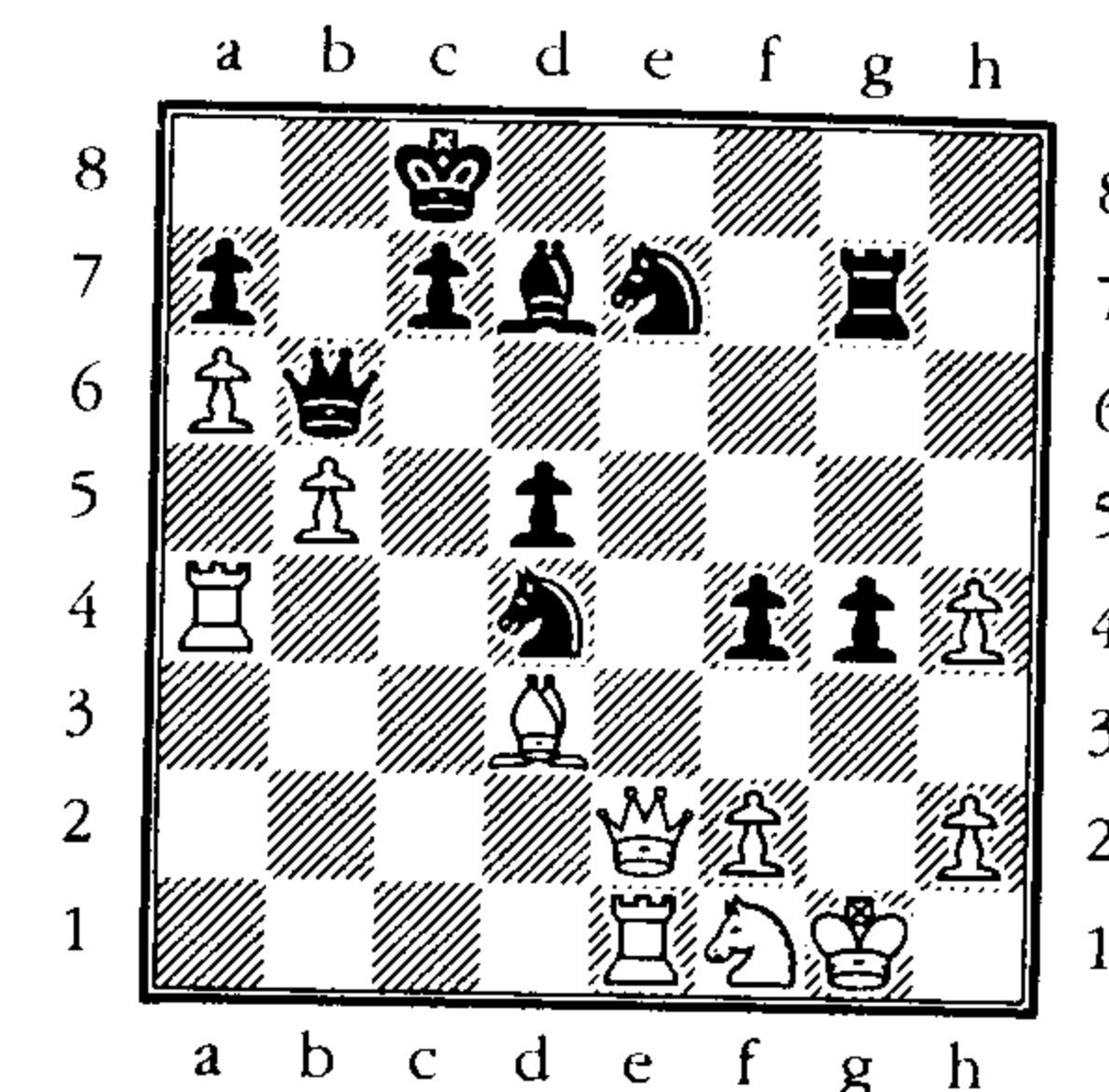
25...♖e6 26 ♜a4

An interesting possibility was 26 ♖f5 ♖xd4 when we have:

a) 27 ♖xe7+?! ♖d8! (gaining a vital tempo for the attack as after 27...♜xe7?! 28 ♗xe7 ♖f3+ 29 ♖g2 ♗h6 30 h4! Black fails to break through) 28 ♗b2 ♖f3+ 29 ♖g2 ♗h6 30 h4 gxh3+ 31 ♖h1 (31 ♖xf3?? ♜g4 mate) 31...fxg3 32 fxg3 ♖xe1 33 ♜xe1 ♜xe7 and Black's material advantage will prove decisive.

b) 27 ♖xd4 ♗xd4 28 ♗e5 ♗xe5 29 ♜xe5 ♜f8 30 ♜ae1 ♖d8 31 ♖d2 ♜f6 with approximate equality.

26...♜xh4!? 27 gxh4 ♖xd4



28 ♜xd4

28 ♗b2?! ♖f3+ 29 ♖h1 ♖xe1 30 ♗xg7 (threatening mate with ♗g7-f8+) 30...♖d8 31 ♜xf4 ♖xd3 when Black is well on top.

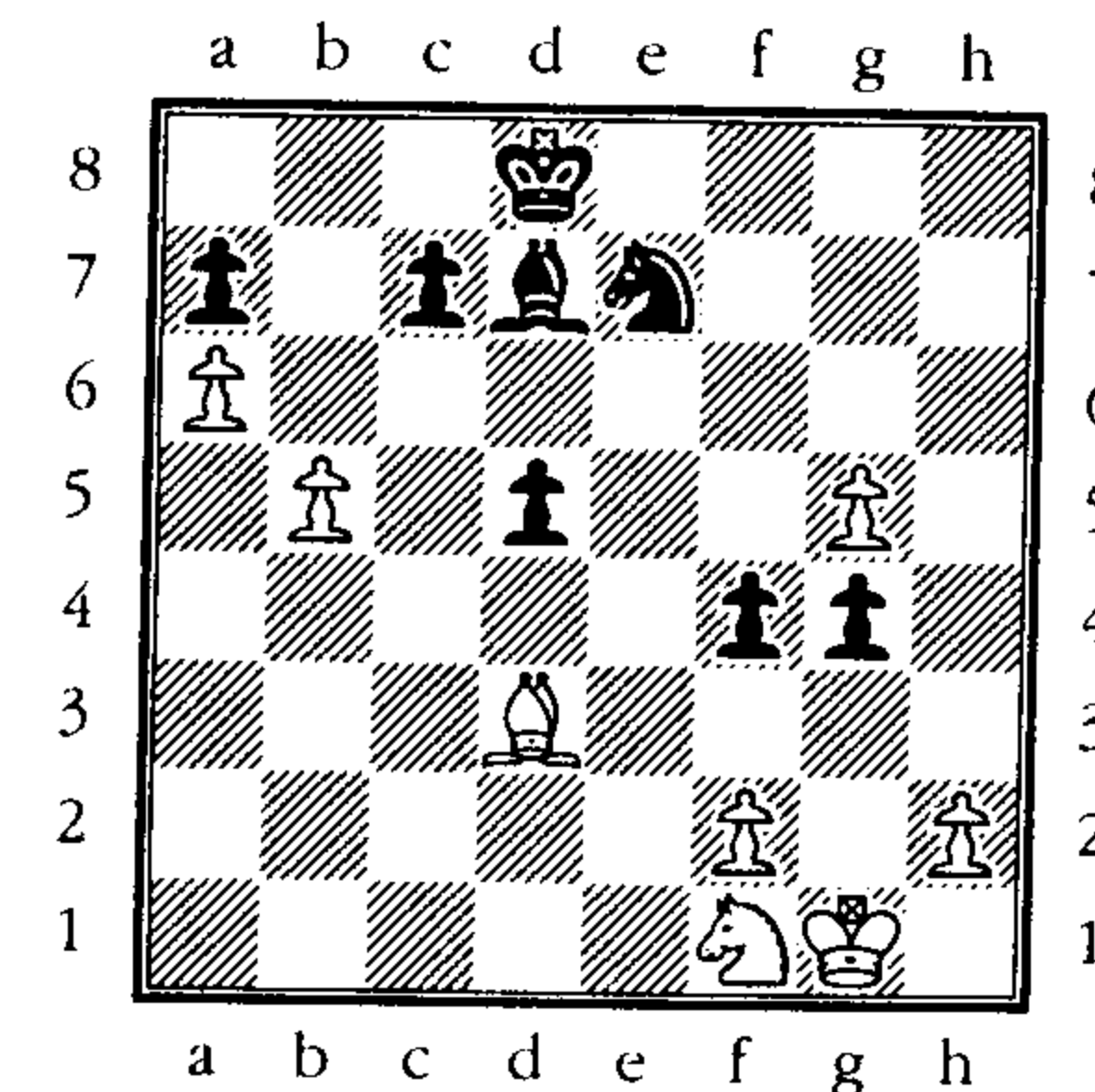
28...♗xd4 29 ♗e5 ♗xe5 30 ♜xe5

The position has now changed dramatically from one of tactical king assaults to a strategic ending.

30...♖d8 31 ♜g5?!

It is very tempting to push the passed pawn by 31 h5 ♜g8 32 h6 ♜h8 33 h7 as it ties down the black pieces. On the other hand, though, it could become weak and therefore a target if White cannot maintain control of the position.

31...♜xg5 32 hxg5



32...♖e8

Black 'misses his shot' with 32...c5! 33 bxc6 ♖xc6 which gives Black a small edge as he has created his own passed pawn and can easily cover White's 'g'-pawn with his king.

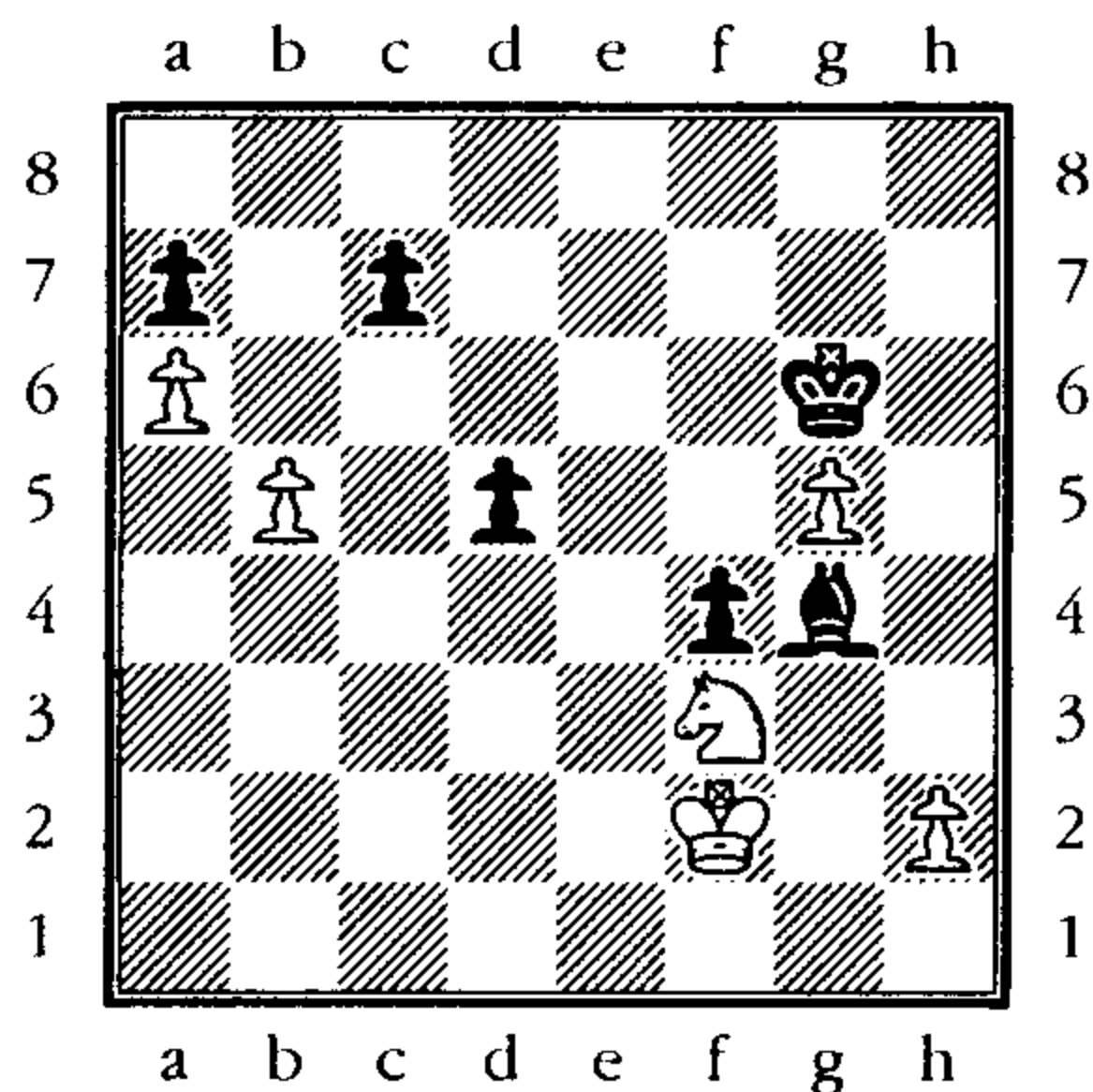
33 f3!

A good way of taking the sting out of Black's menacing-looking pawns on f4 and g4.

33...♖f7 34 ♖f2 ♖g6 35 ♖d2

35 fxc4 ♖e5! 36 ♖e2 d4 37 h4 d3 38 ♖f3 ♖xb5 is good for Black as White's connected passed pawns are not that strong and her queen-side falls apart.

35...♖e5 36 ♖e2 ♖g6 37 fxc4 ♖xc4+ 38 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 39 ♖f3

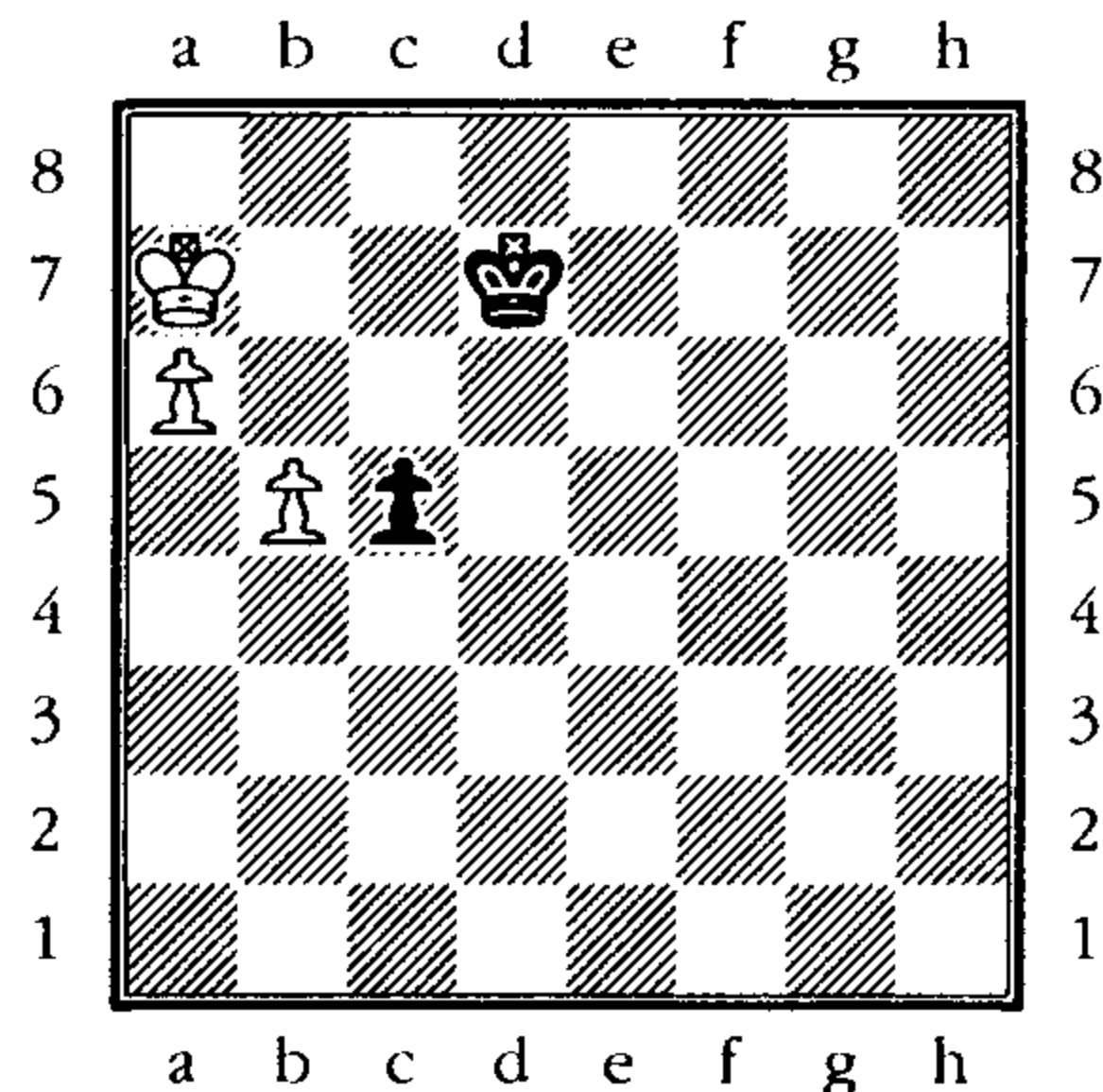


39...♖xf3??

Entering a king and pawn ending that loses without too much of a struggle. I can only presume that Black had either miscalculated or hadn't seen the resistance offered by 39...♖f5 40 h4 when White is better (not 40 ♖d4+ which works out badly e.g. 40...♖xg5 41 ♖c6 d4—Black's pawns suddenly accelerate!

—42 ♖xa7 d3 43 ♖e1 f3 44 ♖c6 f2+! 45 ♖xf2 d2 46 a7 d1=♚ 47 a8=♚ ♚e2+ 48 ♖g1 ♚e3+ 49 ♖g2 ♖h3+ 50 ♖h1 ♚e1 mate) but still has work to do after 40...♖h5! 41 ♖d4+ ♖g4.

40 ♖xf3 ♖xg5 41 h4+ ♖f5 42 h5 d4 43 h6 ♖g6 44 ♖xf4 ♖xh6 45 ♖e4 ♖g6 46 ♖xd4 ♖f6 47 ♖d5 ♖e7 48 ♖c6 ♖d8 49 ♖b7 ♖d7 50 ♖xa7 c5



51 b6 1-0

White's one opportunity to blow it all lay in 51 bxc6+?? ♖c7 52 ♖a8 ♖c8 with a draw.

The next game is between the very talented and solid Jonathan Parker and Gary Quillan, whose 'C.V.', amongst other things, includes a record number of appearances in the 4NCL.

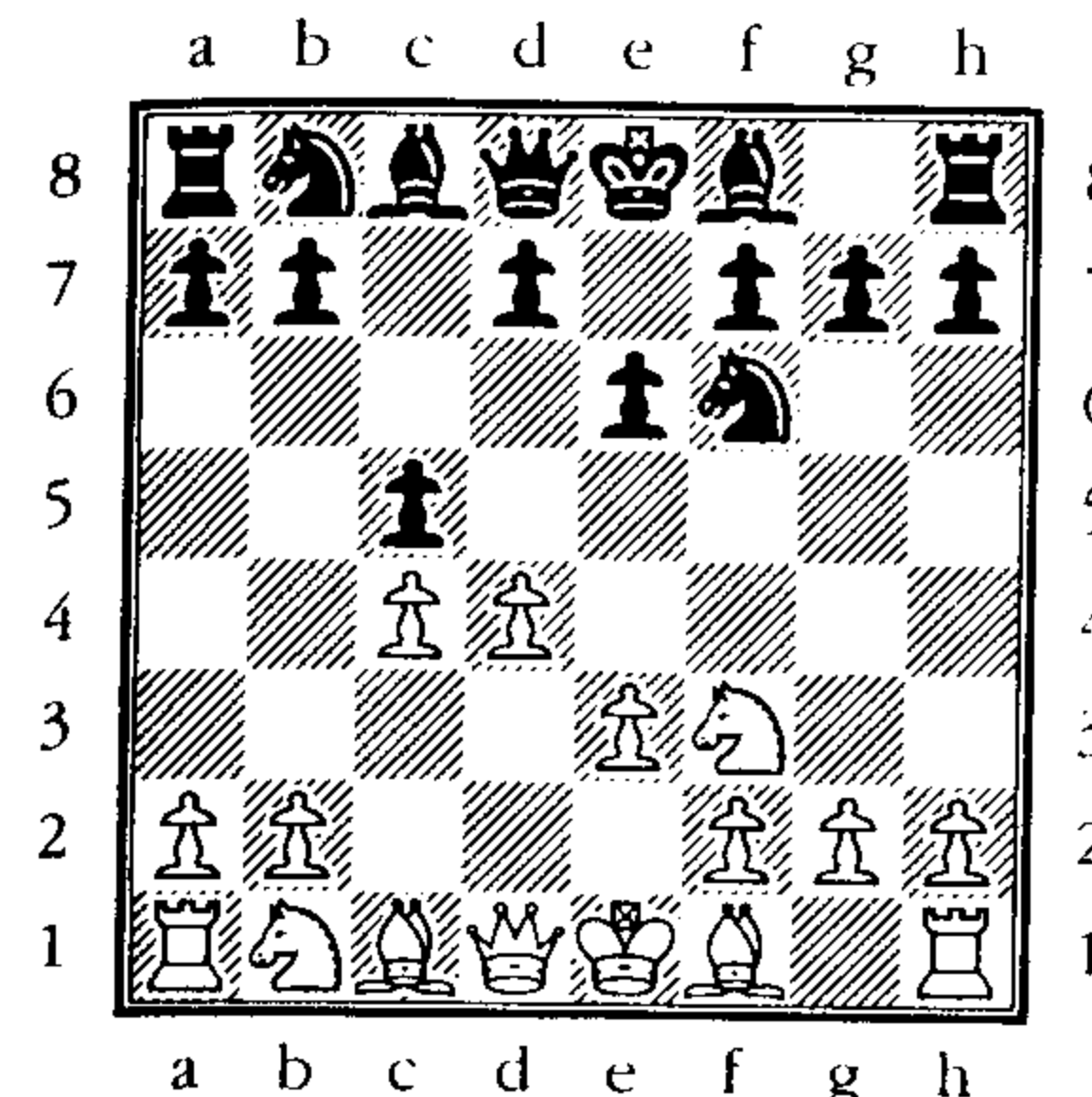
White: Jonathan Parker

Black: Gary Quillan
4NCL, Birmingham, 2000

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖f3 c5 4 e3

Slightly unusual but in keeping with Parker's style. He prefers tense positions of a quieter nature.

Normal would have been 4 d5, entering a Modern Benoni.



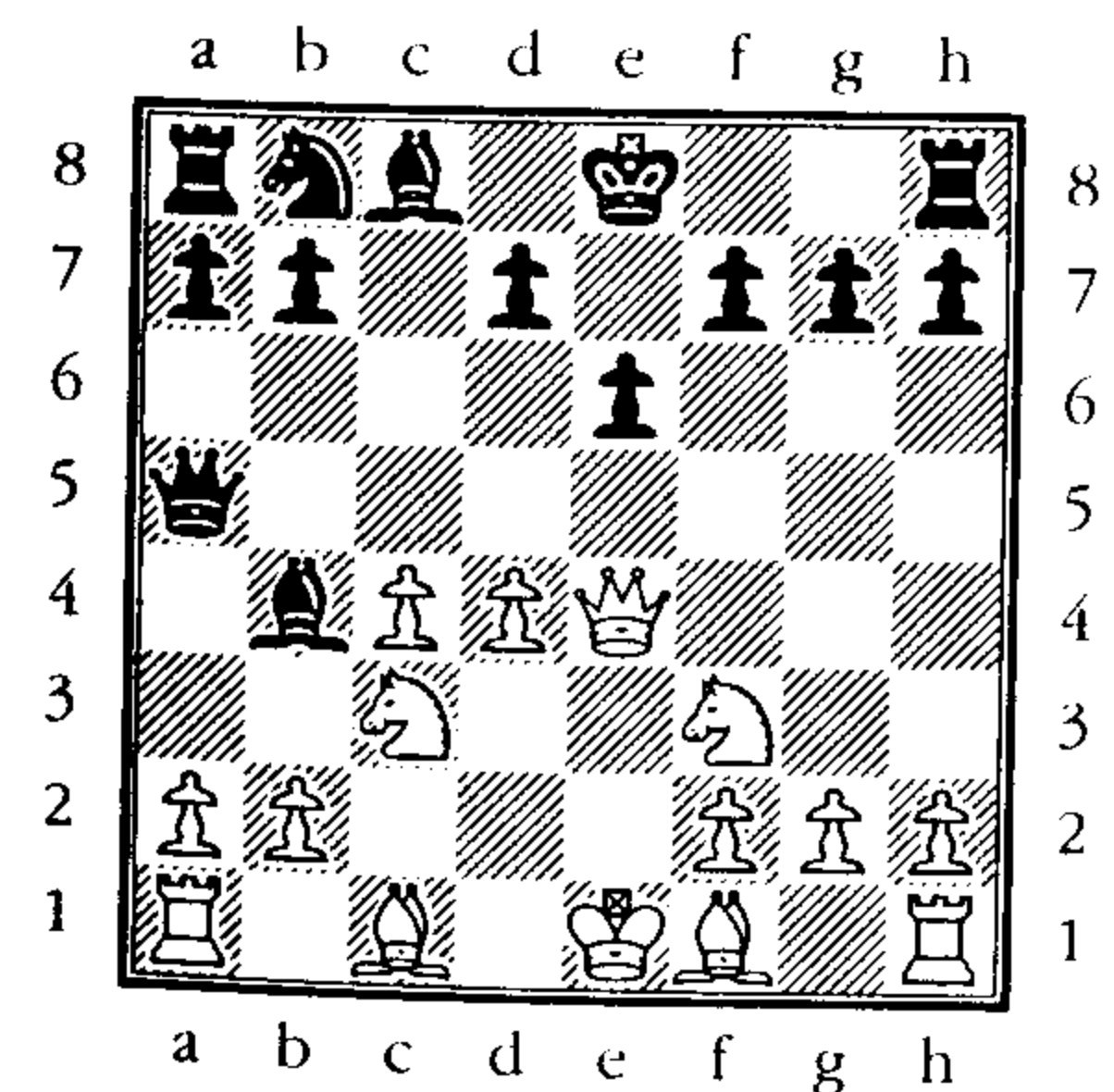
4...cxd4

Releasing the central tension in order to obtain active piece play. 5...d5 would have led to a symmetrical line of the Tarrasch Defence.

5 exd4 ♖b4+ 6 ♖c3 ♖e4 7 ♚c2 ♚a5

A novelty but perhaps not as strong as it first looks. 7...d5 has been previously played.

8 ♚xe4!



Exchanging one of Black's better pieces.

8...♖xc3+ 9 ♖d2

Now Black must backtrack as it would be foolhardy to concede the bishop pair, especially as Black would end up with so many dark-squared weaknesses.

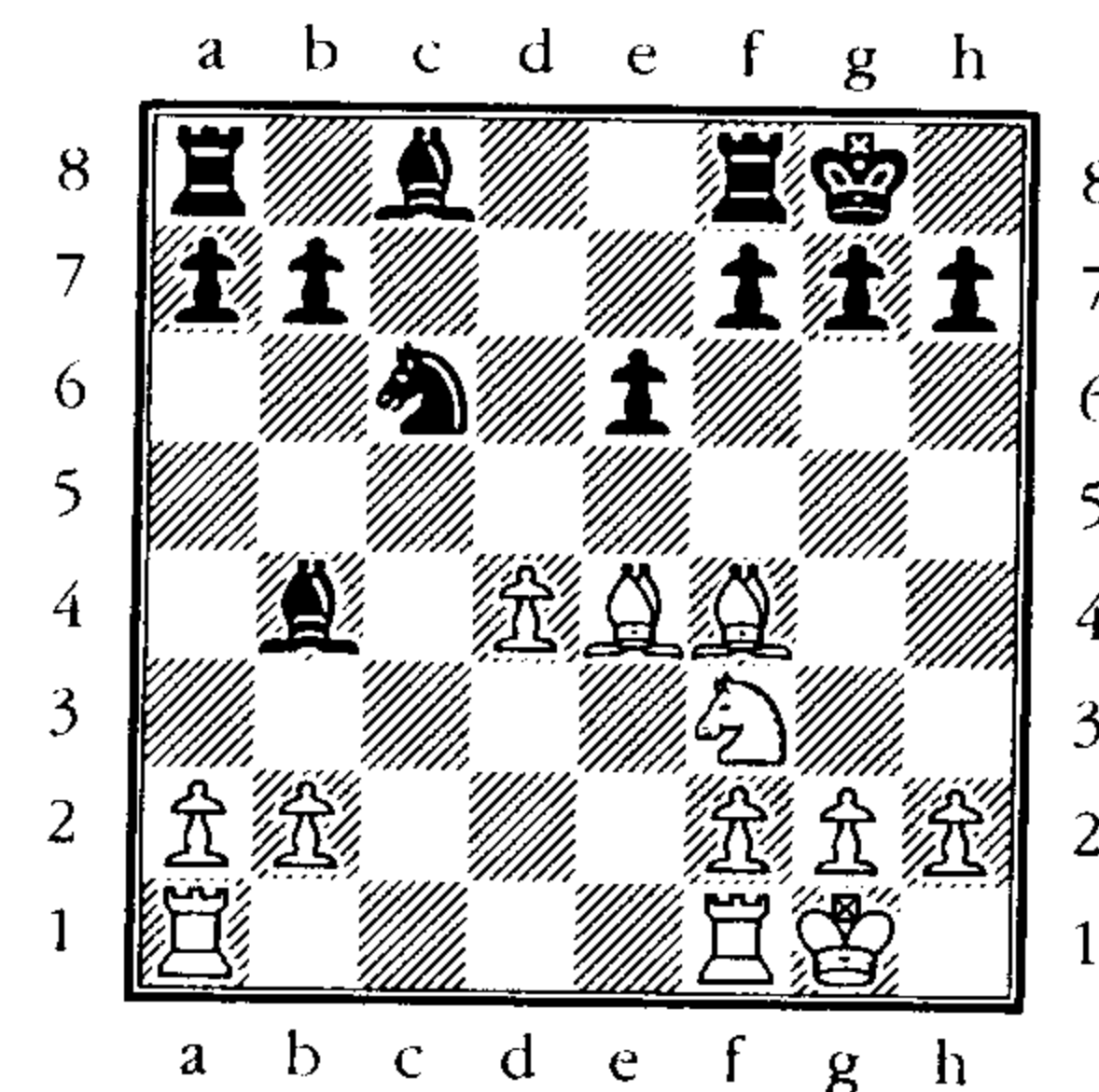
9...♖b4 10 ♖d3 d5 11 cxd5 ♚xd5

White ends up with an isolated pawn and must hope for active piece play. He could exchange queens on d5 to return the favour but a black pawn on d5 would cover the useful c4 and e4 squares and White could not then expect any advantage from the opening.

12 0-0 ♖c6 13 ♖f3 ♚xe4

Black exchanges queens, otherwise it would be difficult for him to find a safe haven for his king. However the downside is that it places White's light-squared bishop nicely on the h1-a8 diagonal.

14 ♖xe4 0-0 15 ♖f4



As yet, White's isolated pawn is not a source of weakness and his bishops on e4 and f4 cover half the board. Black needs to complete development without creating too many weaknesses.

15...♖d8 16 ♖fd1 ♖e7 17 ♖c7!?

A strange-looking move. 17 ♖ac1 would have put his rook on the open file and still left Black with the problem of completing development. With the text move White hopes to restrict Black further by reducing his working space.

17...♞d7 18 ♖ac1 ♘d5

Taking the opportunity to occupy the 'weak' square—the weak square being the one in front of an isolated pawn as it can only be removed by piece action.

19 ♗g3 f6

Committal. 19...♗a5 would have given Black a solid—if a little uninspiring—position.

20 ♞c4

Threatening to win a piece with ♗e4xd5 and ♞c4xb4.

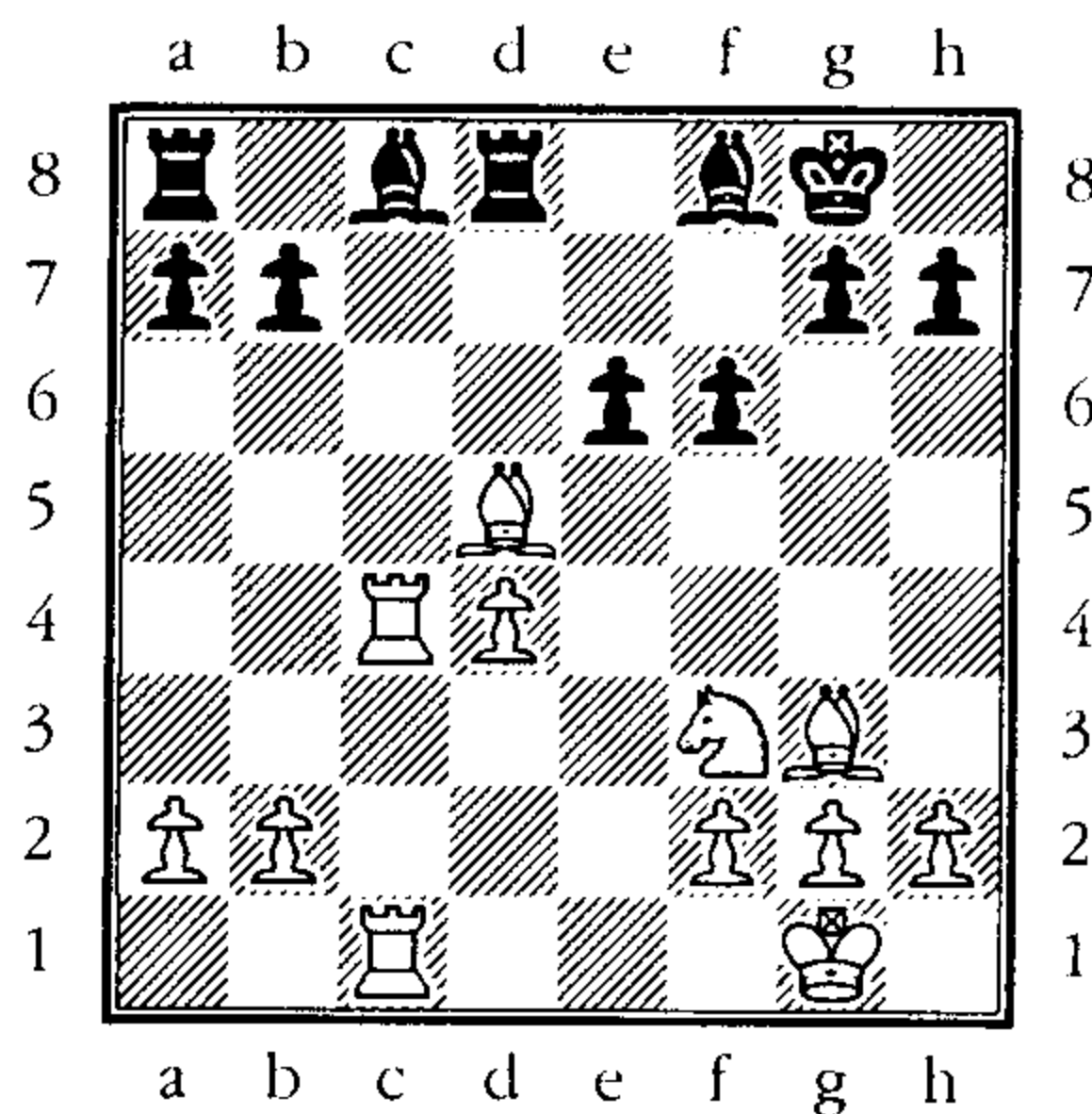
20...♗f8

Again ♗b4-a5, covering the c7 square, should have come into consideration.

21 ♞dc1

Doubling up rooks on the open file and threatening to capture on c8.

21...♞d8 22 ♗xd5



To equalise the pawn structure White allows Black the advantage of the two bishops, estimating, at least for the time being, that they will not combine to any great effect in the resulting fairly closed position. It is this kind of judgement, rather than just sheer calculation, that separates the 'men from the boys'.

22...exd5 23 ♞c7 b6

23...♞e8, placing his own rook on the newly created open 'e'-file, has its merits.

24 ♘d2 ♗f5 25 ♘f1

At last White seeks to redeploy his knight to a more active post.

25...♗e6?!

This retreat seems to question the choice of Black's previous move as it removes the bishop from an active diagonal (b1-h7) to a quieter post.

26 h4!

White restricts Black's kingside and creates a bolt hole for his king, the far reaching consequences of which are not seen until late in the game.

26...g6 27 ♞1c6

White seeks to push Black back further.

27...♞e8 28 ♗d6 ♗h6!

Black correctly doesn't want to give up his only real trump card—the bishop pair.

29 ♗e7 ♗f4!

Now it is White's turn to backtrack.

30 ♗d6 ♗h6 31 ♘e3 ♗g7

With 31...♗xe3 32 fxe3 ♞ac8! Black would have had good chances

of holding the position as exchanges on the 'c'-file seem inevitable and with bishops of opposite colour the game could soon fade out to a draw.

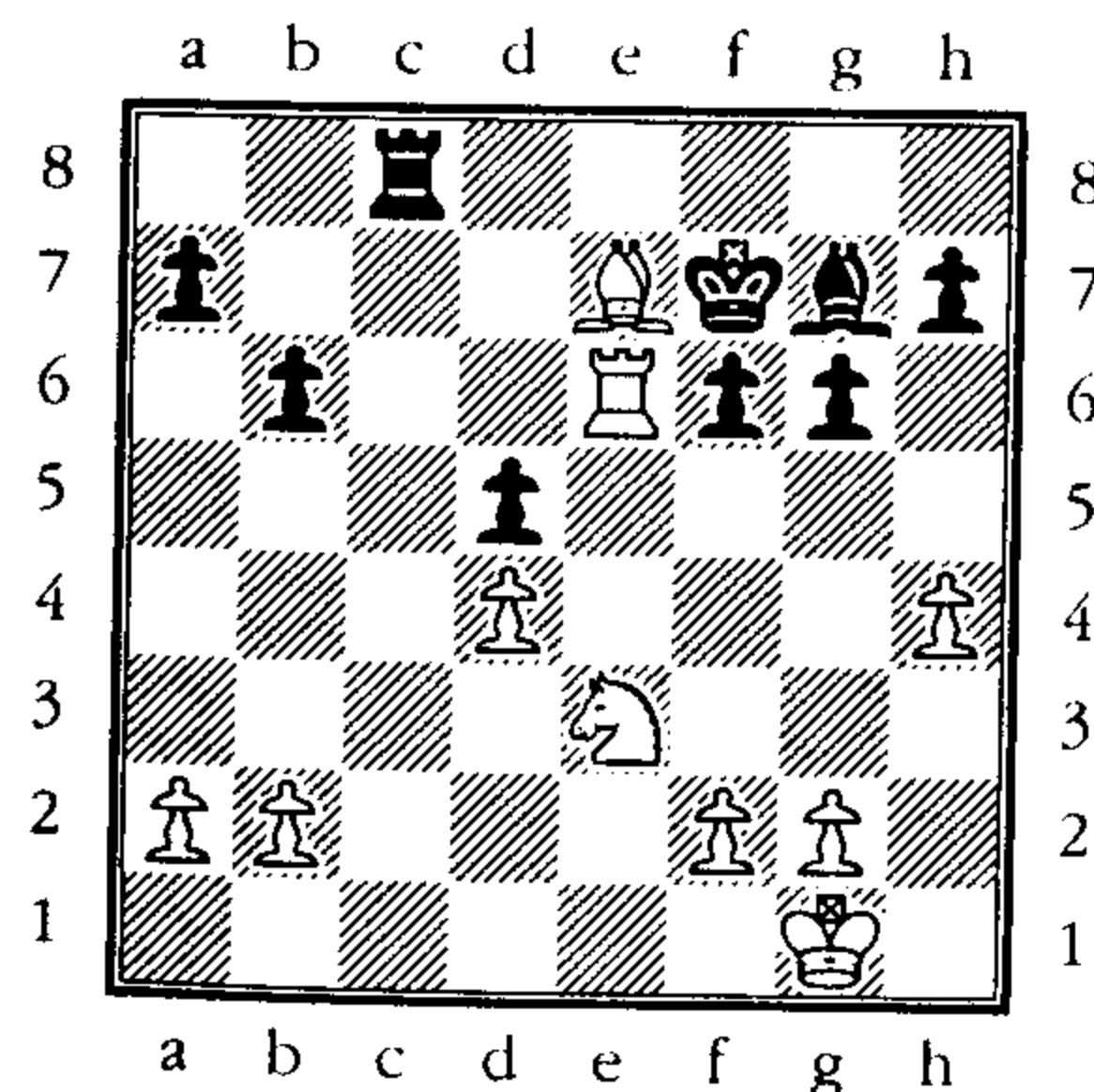
32 ♗e7 ♞ac8!?

A clever way of contesting the 'c'-file as Black's bishop on e6 is not, at least at the moment, hanging. However there is a downside.

33 ♞xc8 ♞xc8!

After 33...♗xc8 34 ♗xf6 ♗d7 35 ♞d6 (also possible is 35 ♞c7 but after the reduction of material following 35...♗xf6 36 ♞xd7 ♗xd4 37 ♘xd5 ♗xb2 38 ♞xa7 ♞e2 White may still have some technical problems in securing the full point) 35...♗xf6 36 ♞xf6 ♗e6 37 g4 Black has very much an uphill struggle as not only is he a pawn down but he has the inferior minor piece to boot.

34 ♞xe6 ♗f7



35 ♗xf6!

At first sight it seems that a better chance might lie in the more straightforward 35 ♞d6 ♗xe7 36 ♞xd5 but perhaps White feared that after 36...♗h6 37 ♗h2 ♗xe3 38 fxe3 ♞c2 39 ♞b5 ♞e2 40 ♞b3 f5 it

would be difficult to make further progress.

35...♗xf6 36 ♞d6 ♗xd4

With threats such as ...♗d4xb2 and ...♞c8-c1+ (when White would need to retreat with ♗e3-f1 as ♗g1-h2 allows ...♗d4-e5+ and xd6) followed by ...♞c1-c2 pressurising the seventh rank.

37 ♞xd5 ♞c1+ 38 ♗h2 ♗xe3

Entering the rook and pawn ending a pawn down should offer better chances of securing the half point than taking on b2.

39 fxe3 ♗e6!

Improving the position of the king and stopping White's rook from getting to the seventh rank where it would be a real menace.

40 ♞d3 ♞c2 41 ♞a3

In effect, exchanging a pair of pawns as ...a5 would be met by ♞b3 when Black would find it necessary to retreat his rook from its active post. In some ways, though, the further reduction of material should favour the 'defending' side.

41...♞xb2 42 ♞xa7 h5

Tying down White's kingside pawns but at the cost of slightly weakening his own 'g'-pawn.

43 ♗g3 ♞b4

Black hopes to cut off the white king from the action.

44 ♞g7 ♗f5 45 ♞f7+ ♗e5 46 ♞e7+ ♗f5 47 ♗f3

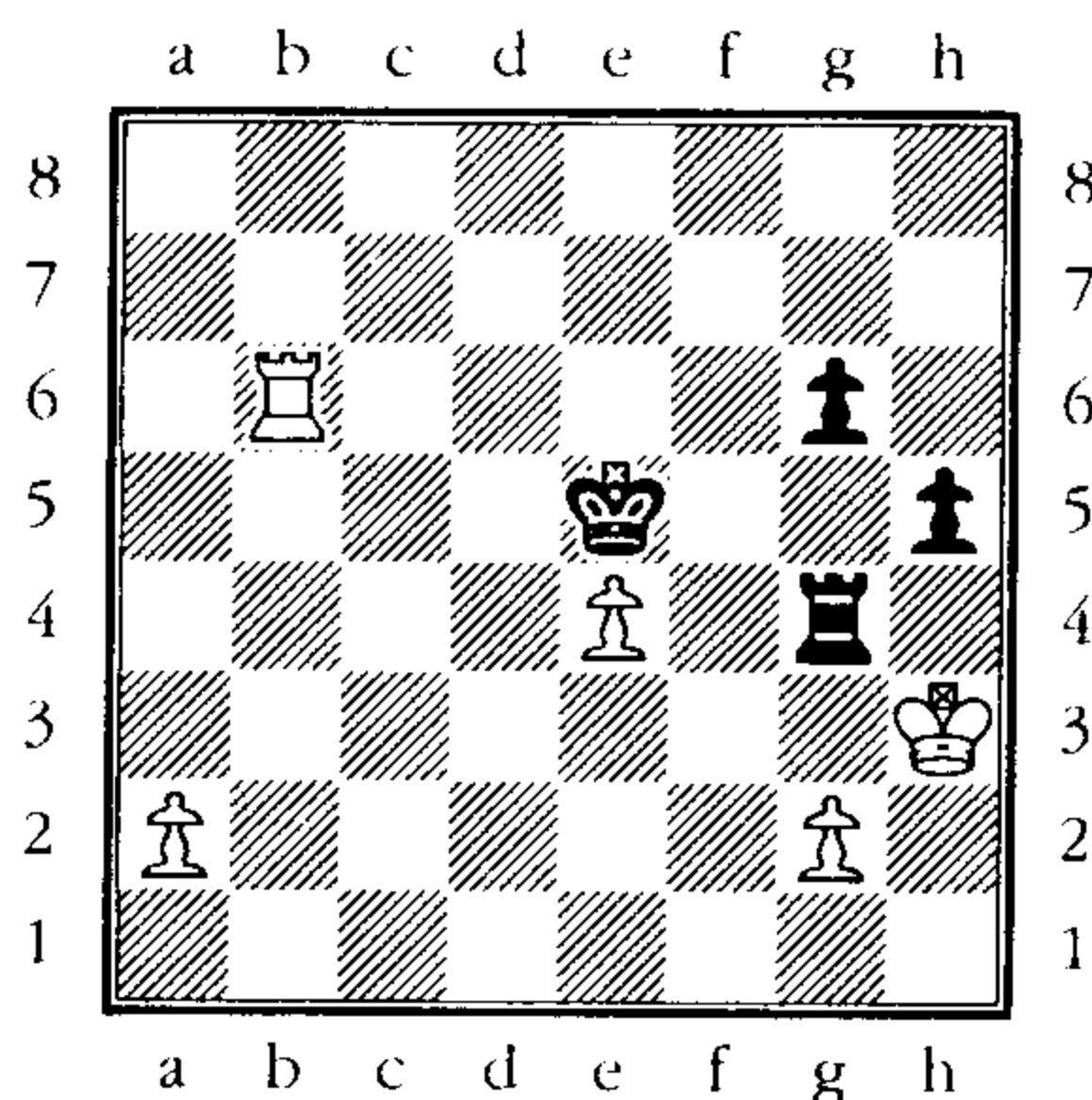
The downside of Black's decision on move 43 is that White can now try to make progress with e3-e4+. Although this will cost him his 'h'-pawn, the question remains, at least

for now, as to how much the 'h' pawn is worth.

47...♖xh4 48 e4+ ♔f6 49 ♖b7

In return White will pick up the 'b'-pawn, leaving him with two passed pawns. The real cost to Black, though, is that White's king has become active while Black's will be forced into passivity if he is not careful.

49...♔e5 50 ♖xb6 ♖f4+ 51 ♔g3 ♖g4+ 52 ♔h3



52...g5

Alternatively Black could have tried:

a) 52...♔xe4?? which leaves Black with a hopeless king and pawn ending after 53 ♖b4+ ♔f5 54 ♖xg4 hxg4+ 55 ♔g3;

b) 52...♖xe4! which is enough to draw as after 53 ♖xg6 ♖a4 54 ♖h6 ♖xa2 55 ♖xh5+ ♔f6 Black has reached a 'technically' drawn rook and pawn ending as his king will be able to control the queening square.

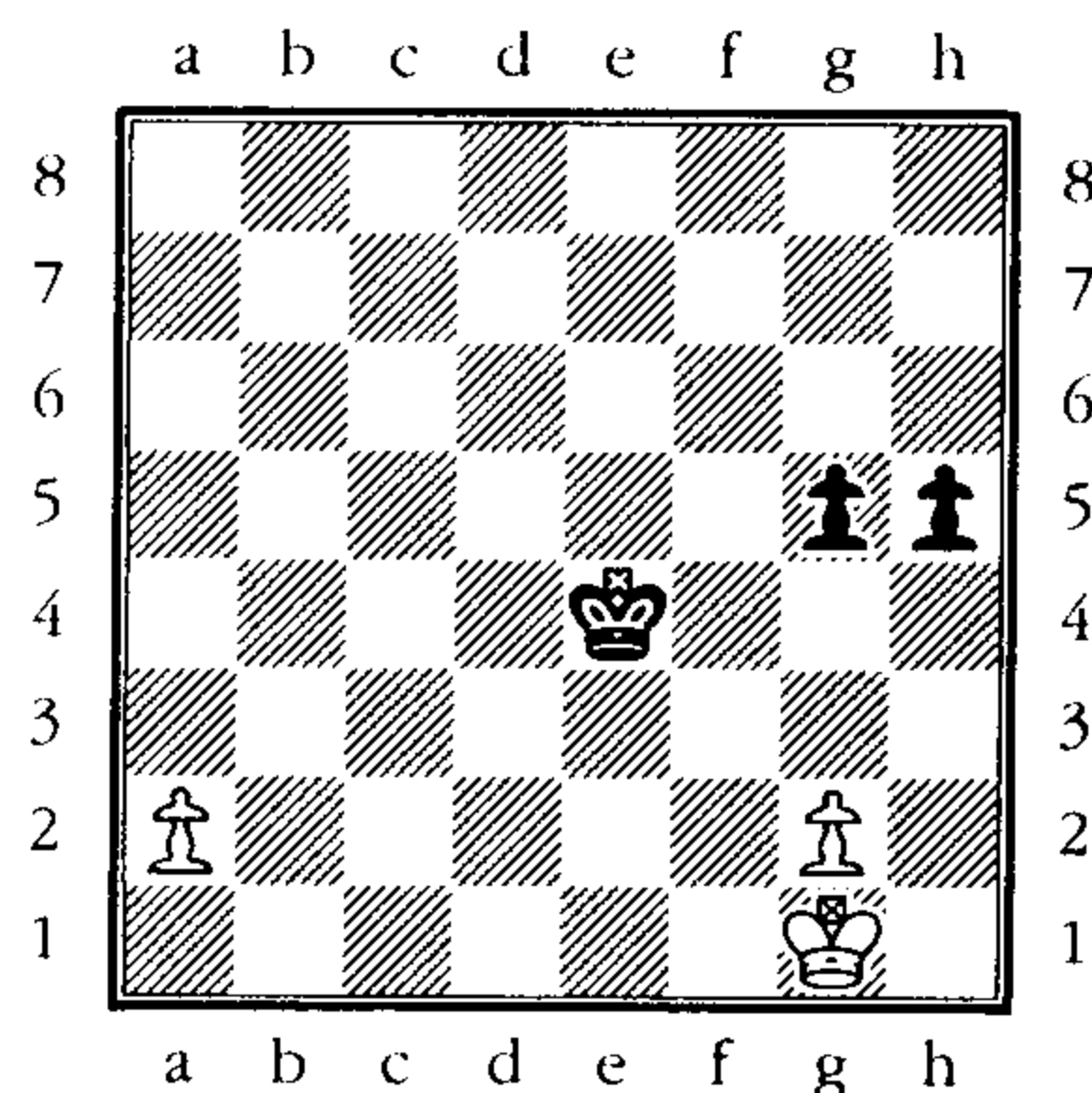
53 ♖b4 ♖h4+ 54 ♔g3 ♖g4+ 55 ♔h2 ♖h4+ 56 ♔g1

Now the question is whether or not Black should exchange rooks and enter the king and pawn ending.

56...♖xe4??

56...♖f4 was correct and still offered some hope of a draw.

57 ♖xe4+! ♔xe4



58 ♔h2! 1-0

The move that Black had missed when exchanging. He had expected 58 ♔f2 h4 59 a4 g4 60 a5 ♔d5 61 ♔e3 h3 leading to a draw. Black now resigned because of:

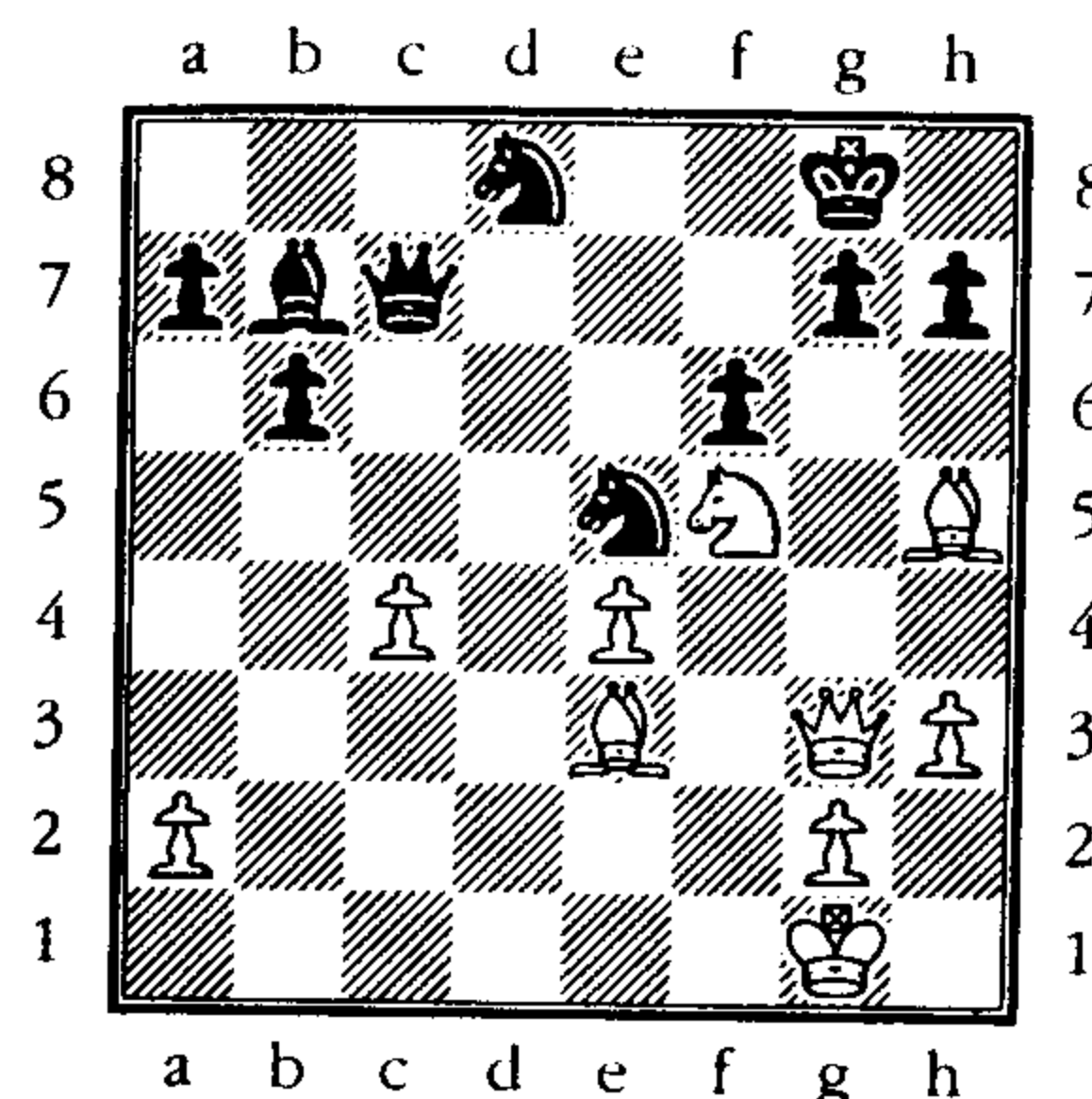
a) 58...g4 59 ♔g3 ♔d4 60 ♔h4 etc., or

b) 58...h4 59 ♔h3 ♔d4 60 ♔g4 winning.

Before the game I said that Jonathan was solid and after his fourth move stated that 'he preferred tense positions of a quieter nature'. These two statements seem to suggest that he is a 'boring' player or that his tactical awareness is lacking in some way. Nothing could be further from the truth, it is just that he recognises the type of positions that he plays best. I

remember once walking through the 4NCL tournament hall with Jonathan when he suddenly pulled me to one side... He had looked at the following position for no more than a few seconds:

White: Richard Palliser
Black: Harriet Hunt
4NCL, Birmingham, 1999



White played 25 ♖d4 and the game was eventually drawn. Can you see what Jonathan had seen?

25 ♖f7+!!

With the following variations:

a) 25...♔h8, 25...♔f8, 25...♖dxf7, 25...♖exf7 all allow 26 ♖xg7 mate;

b) 25...♔xf7 26 ♖xg7+ ♔e8 27 ♖xc7;

c) 25...♖xf7 26 ♖h6+ winning the queen on f7.

Now once you have spotted the key move the variations are not hard to calculate but it is well known that the most difficult sacrifice to find is one where you put a piece on an unoccupied square, especially if your opponent has multiple capturing options in return. And it took Jonathan only seconds to see this!

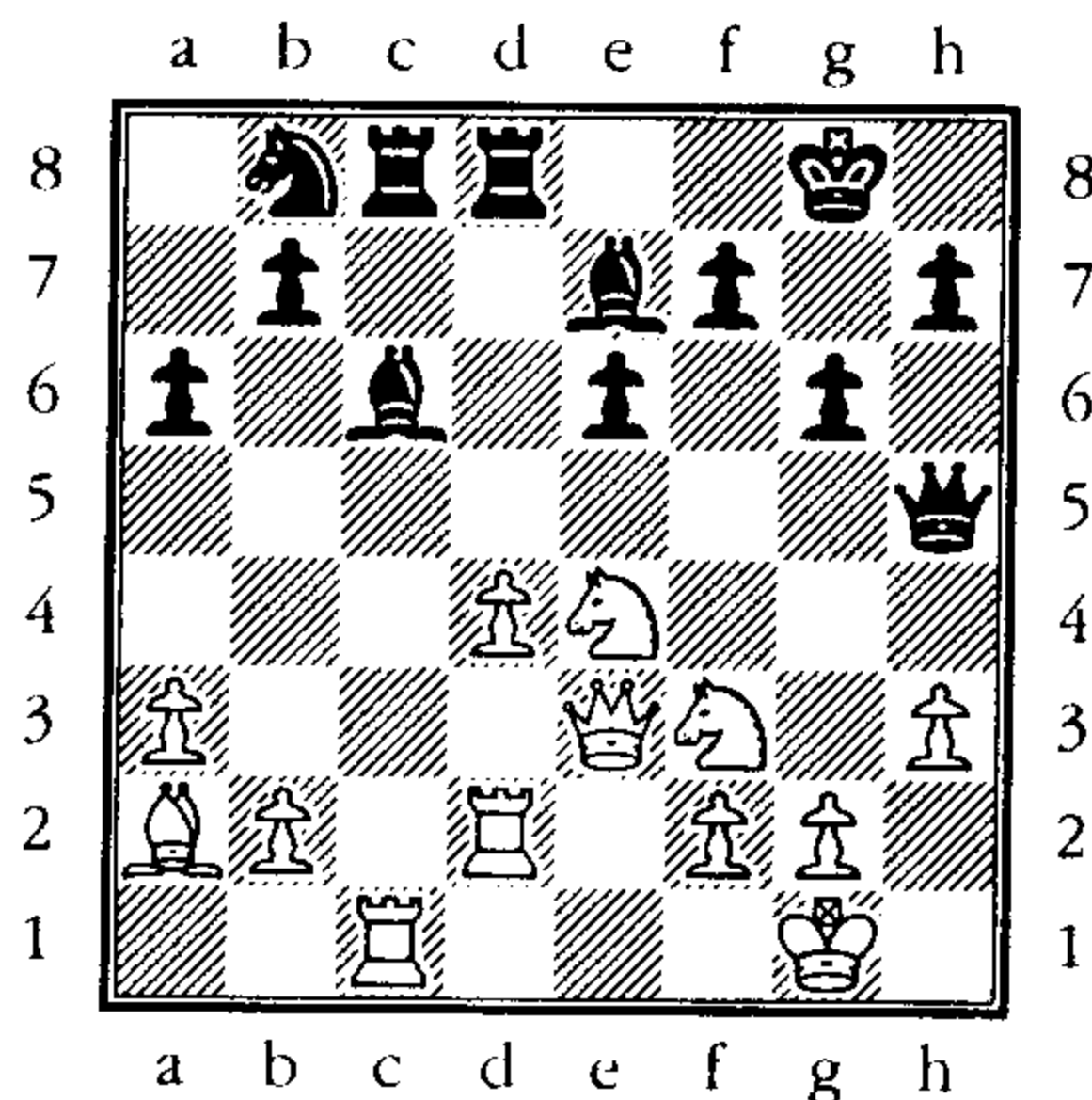
10) Middlegame judgement—when to attack, defend, push—consolidate, overpressing—forming a plan

Exact timing of when to push and when to tighten things up at the back by consolidation is material for a book in itself—the sign of the true master is how he seems to have his 'finger on the pulse' of the situation, correctly judging when to go one way or the other. However, I would say that most masters, if in real doubt, will take a safe route in the expectation that further opportunities will crop up somewhere along the way. Conversely though, weaker players will frequently 'chicken out' of playing a critical and often strong option, believing that they must have missed something—surely their auspicious opponent couldn't really let them play such a strong idea without having something 'up their sleeve'? When the critical moment has safely passed the stronger player will then 'turn the screw'—as a general rule if you shun a critical continuation you don't go from better to equal but from better to worse. I would suggest that next time you get into that kind of situation against somebody you regard as 'strong' that you 'go for it'. If it doesn't work out you might gain from the experience and add a new weapon to your own armoury—but you may just be pleasantly surprised. I remember many years ago playing the late and great Tony Miles as Black in a 40 minute tournament—he was then only an International Master (!) while I was graded 129. After adopting Geller's quiet system against my Pirc Defence and putting

me under pressure, he then played a very thematic idea but had missed a response which all of a sudden would have given me a lot of activity and a way in to his position. Though I wasn't convinced by the counter I was lucky in that the alternatives seemed even less attractive. After the move played it soon became obvious that not only had I broken his stranglehold but was very much in the driving seat and went on to win the game. Some years later, after I had got my own International Master title, I remember Tony saying that he wasn't surprised as he had always thought I had been a talented player—praise indeed from one of England's greatest players of all time.

'Casual' play, as the following game shows, can be fatal. Michael Franklin has long been a strong player but nowadays he tends to avoid complications that he cannot analyse out to a definite conclusion. But, as I have already said, sometimes it is necessary to follow the 'critical' path even if there is an element of 'fear' attached to it.

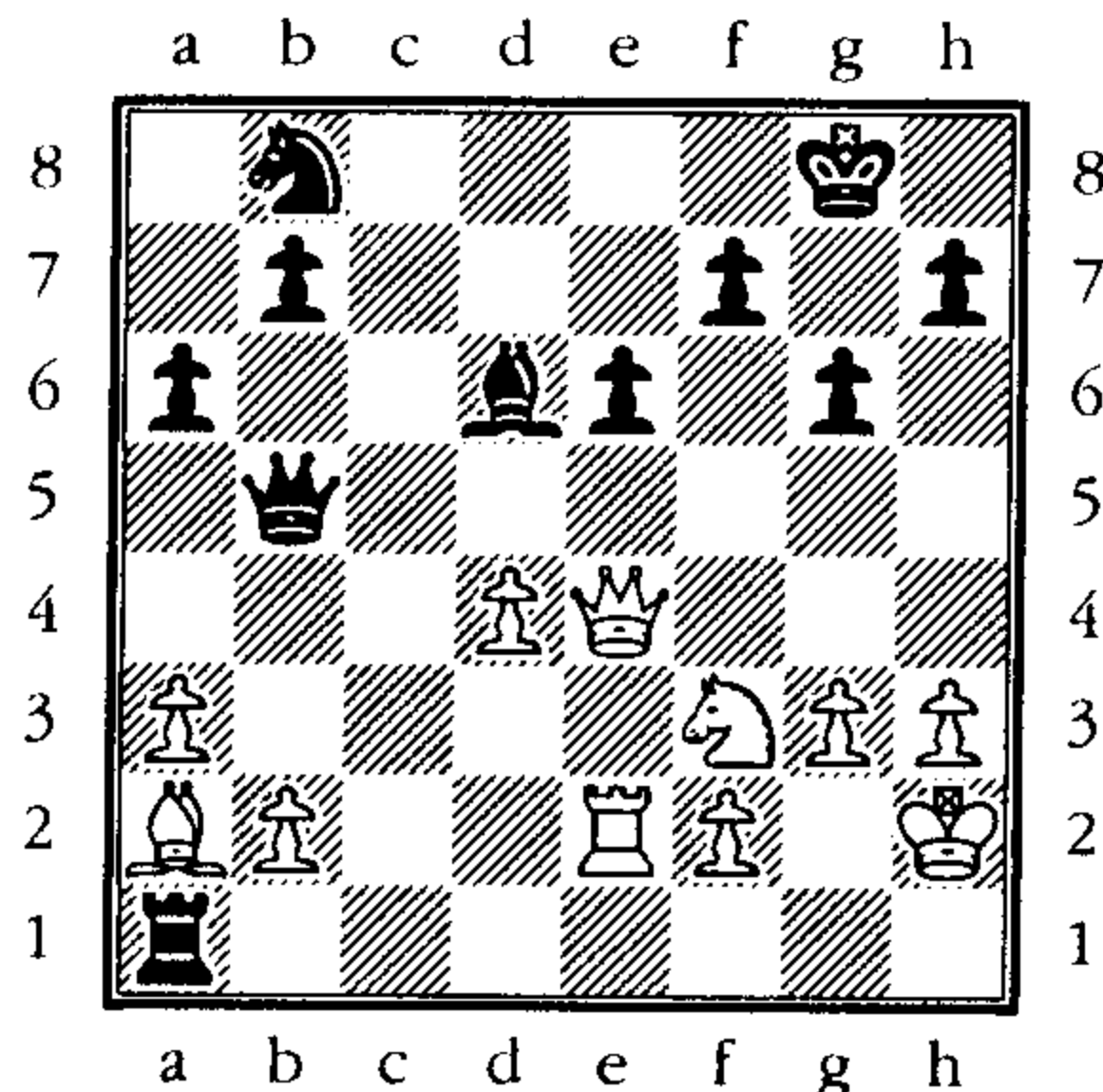
White: Matthew Turner
Black: Michael Franklin
Frome Open 1998



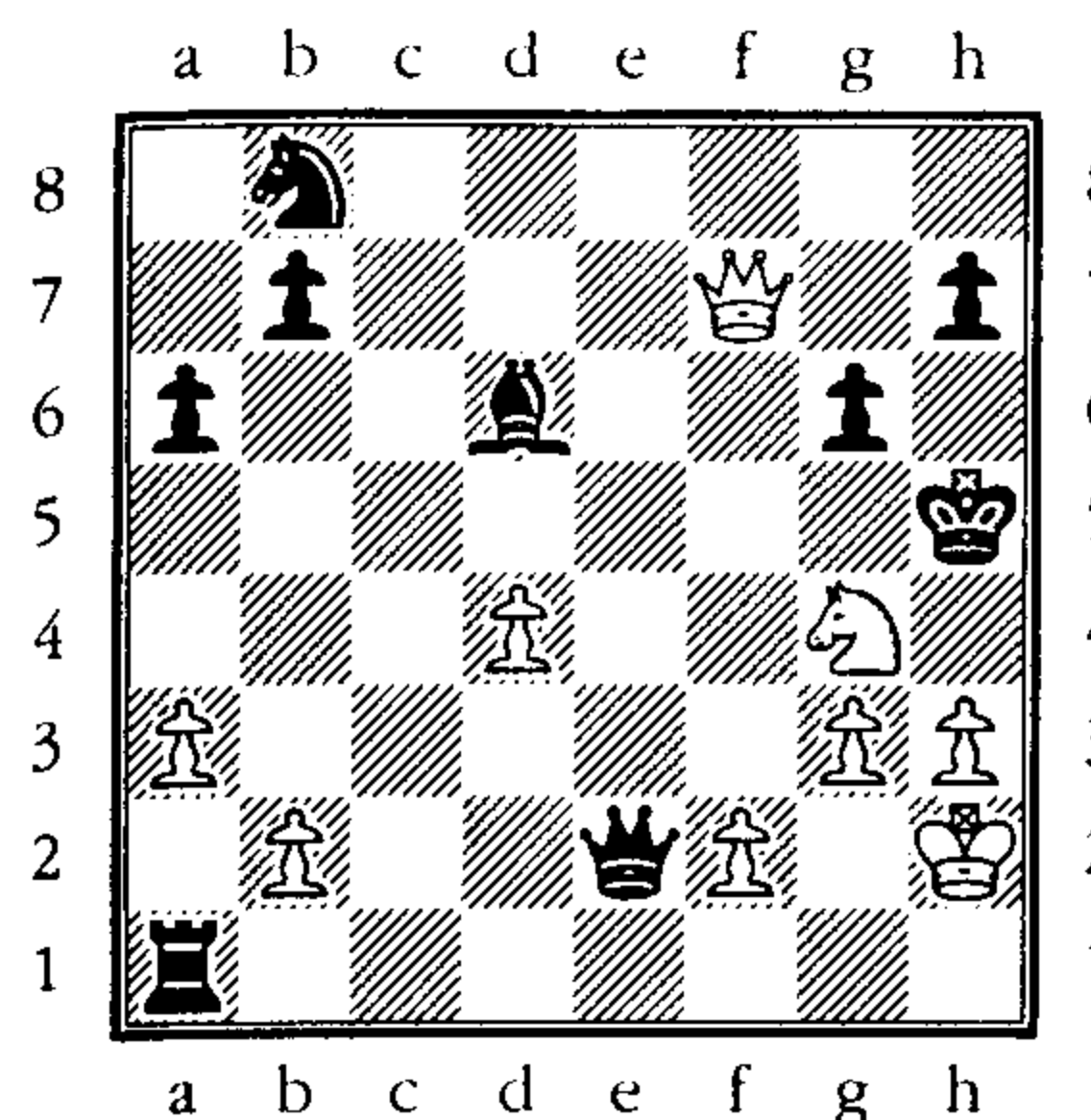
Here Black has a reasonable position—he is solid and has the bishop pair, moreover he has the better pawn structure. However he must take care that his opponent does not exploit the possibility of a potential ♖e4-f6+, forking his king and queen.

24...♙e8?

In fact this is just the right moment to concede the bishop pair by 24...♙xe4 (although also quite feasible is 24...♙d5 25 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 26 ♙xd5 ♖c1+ 27 ♖h2 ♗xd5 with a level position) 25 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 26 ♗xe4 ♖c1+ 27 ♖h2 ♙d6+ 28 g3 ♗b5 29 ♖e2 (29 ♙xe6?? ♗f1) 29...♖a1 with some fascinating possibilities:



a) 30 ♙xe6!? fxe6 31 ♗xe6+ ♖g7 32 ♖e5 ♗xe2 33 ♗f7+ ♖h6 34 ♖g4+ ♖h5 (34...♗xg4?—'normally' a rook and two minor pieces are 'good value' for a queen but this is an exception as the black king is so badly placed and the minor pieces could easily become loose, e.g. 35 hxg4 ♖c6 36 f4 ♖xd4 37 ♖g2! and White will win due to the threat of 38 g5+ as after 38...♖h5 White mates with 39 ♗xh7+ ♖g4 40 ♗h3 mate) and now White has to choose between:



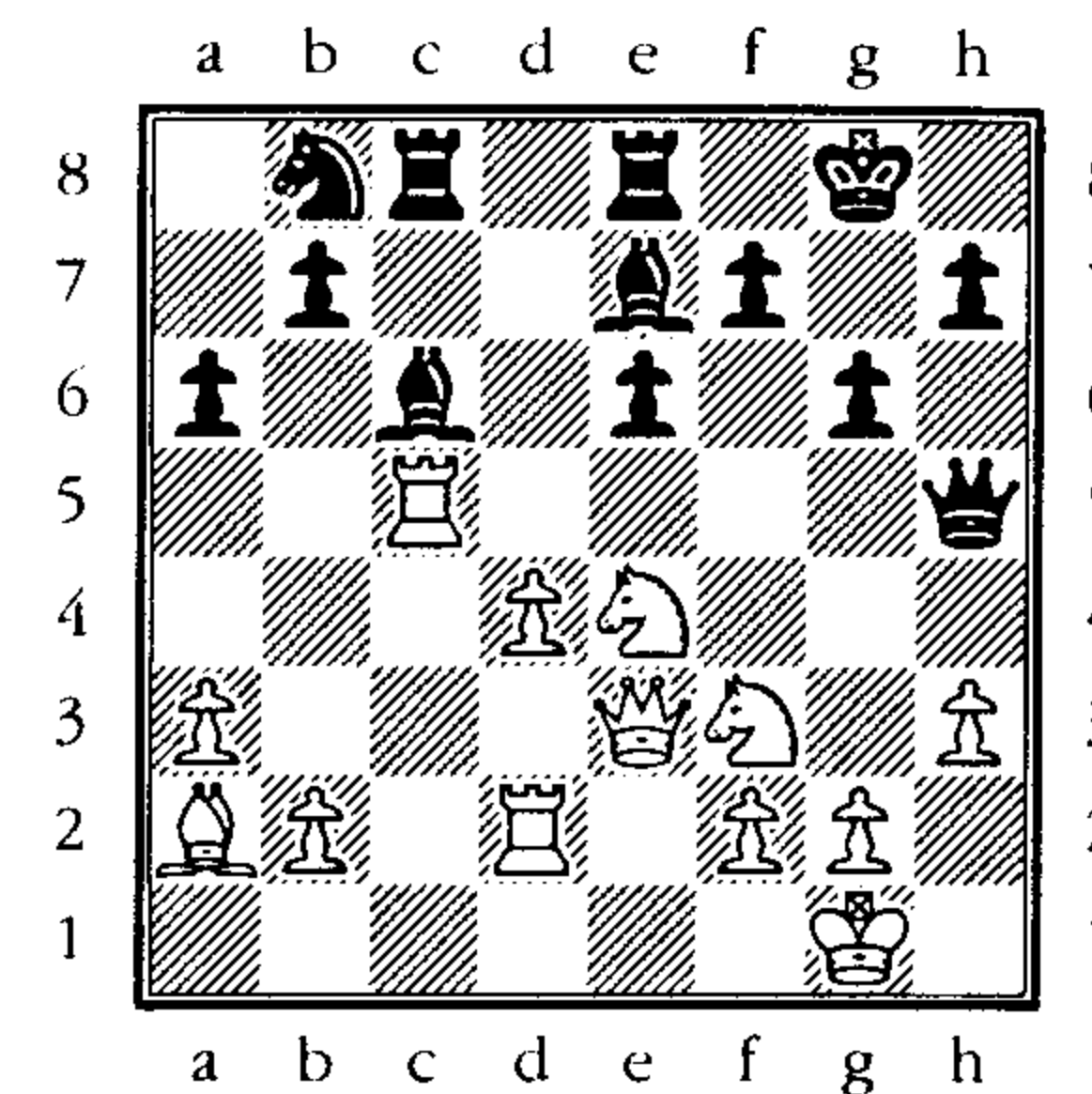
a1) 35 ♗xh7+ ♖g5 36 ♗h4+ ♖f5 37 ♗f6+ ♖e4. White has a lot of play but not enough to win, hence he should probably take the perpetual, e.g. 38 ♗xd6 (38 ♗xg6+ ♖d5 39 ♖e3+ ♖c6 40 ♗e8+ ♖d7 41 ♗e4+ ♖b5 42 ♗d5+ ♖c5 and at last the black king will become secure) 38...♖c6 (38...♗e1?! 39 ♗xg6+ ♖xd4 40 ♗b6+ with a draw as the black king cannot find refuge) 39 ♗xg6+ ♖xd4 40 ♗g7+ ♖e5 41 ♗f6! ♗e4 42 ♗d6+ ♗d5 43 ♗b4+ ♖d3 44 ♗c3+ ♖e2 45 ♗xe5+ ♗xe5 46 ♖xe5 ♖xf2 with a position that is difficult to assess—White has two connected pawns and a knight for a rook but they have a long way to go and his queenside pawns are prone to attack.

a2) 35 ♖f6+ ♖h6 (35...♖g5? 36 h4+ ♖f5 37 ♖d5+ ♖g4 38 ♖e3+ ♗xe3 39 fxe3 ♙xg3+ 40 ♖g2 and once again the rook and two minor pieces fail to co-ordinate well, i.e. 40...♙xh4 41 ♗f3+ ♖g5 42 ♗f4+ and ♗xb8) 36 ♖g4+ with a draw by repetition.

b) 30 b4 ♖d7 31 ♙xe6?! (31 ♗e3 is best) 31...♖f6! 32 ♙xf7+ ♖xf7 33 ♗e6+ ♖g7 (Black's bishop on

d6 is immune as White's rook on e2 would be 'hanging') 34 ♖g5 ♗d5!.

25 ♙c5!



Exploiting the fact that Black's dark-squared bishop is overloaded because of its need to cover both the c5 and f6 squares.

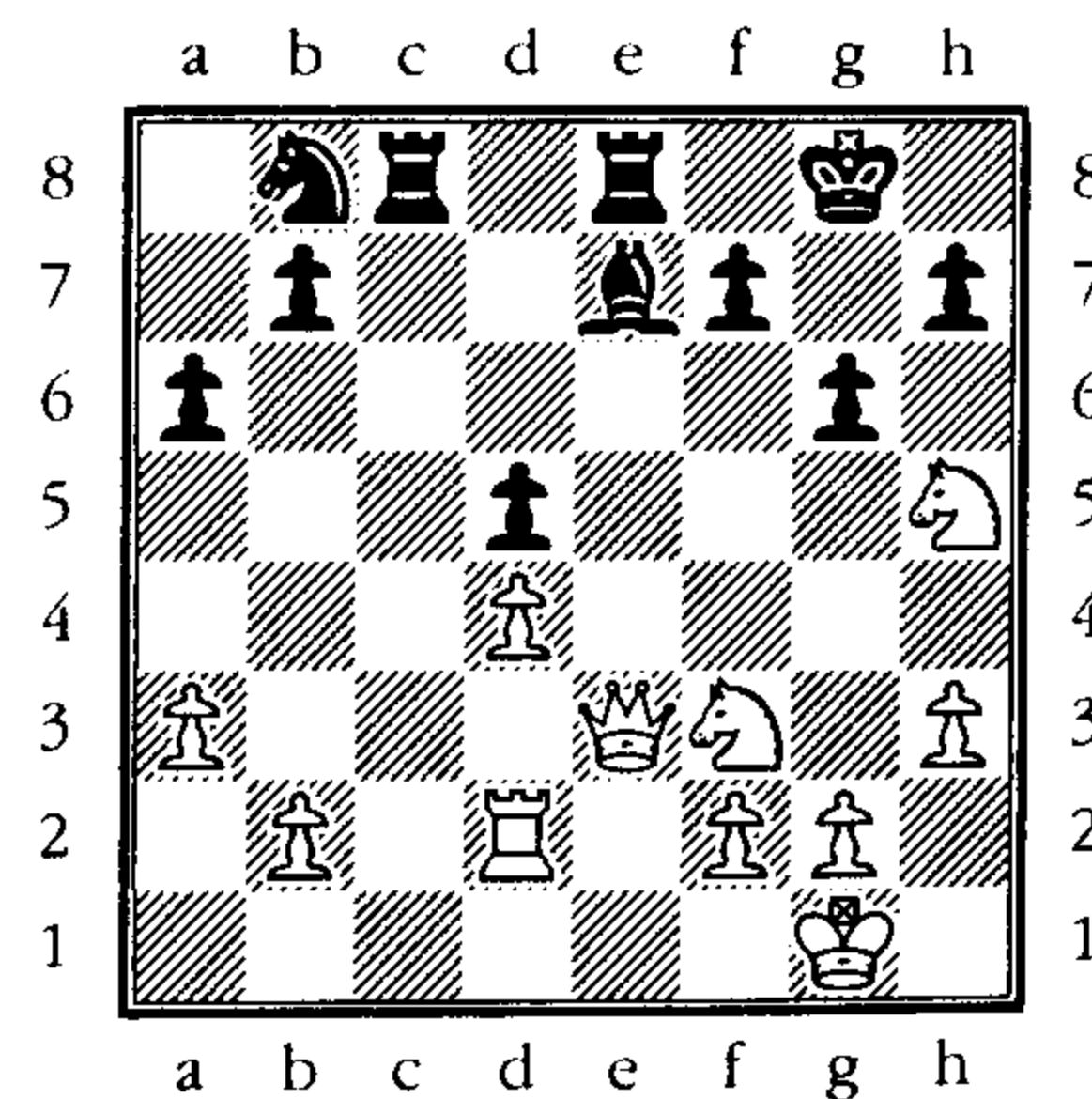
25...♙d5 26 ♖g3!

Exploiting the pin along the fifth rank.

26...♙xc5

26...♗xf3!? 27 gxf3 ♙xc5 28 dxc5 ♙xa2 29 ♖e4! is winning for White as Black has too many dark square problems, in particular on d6 and f6.

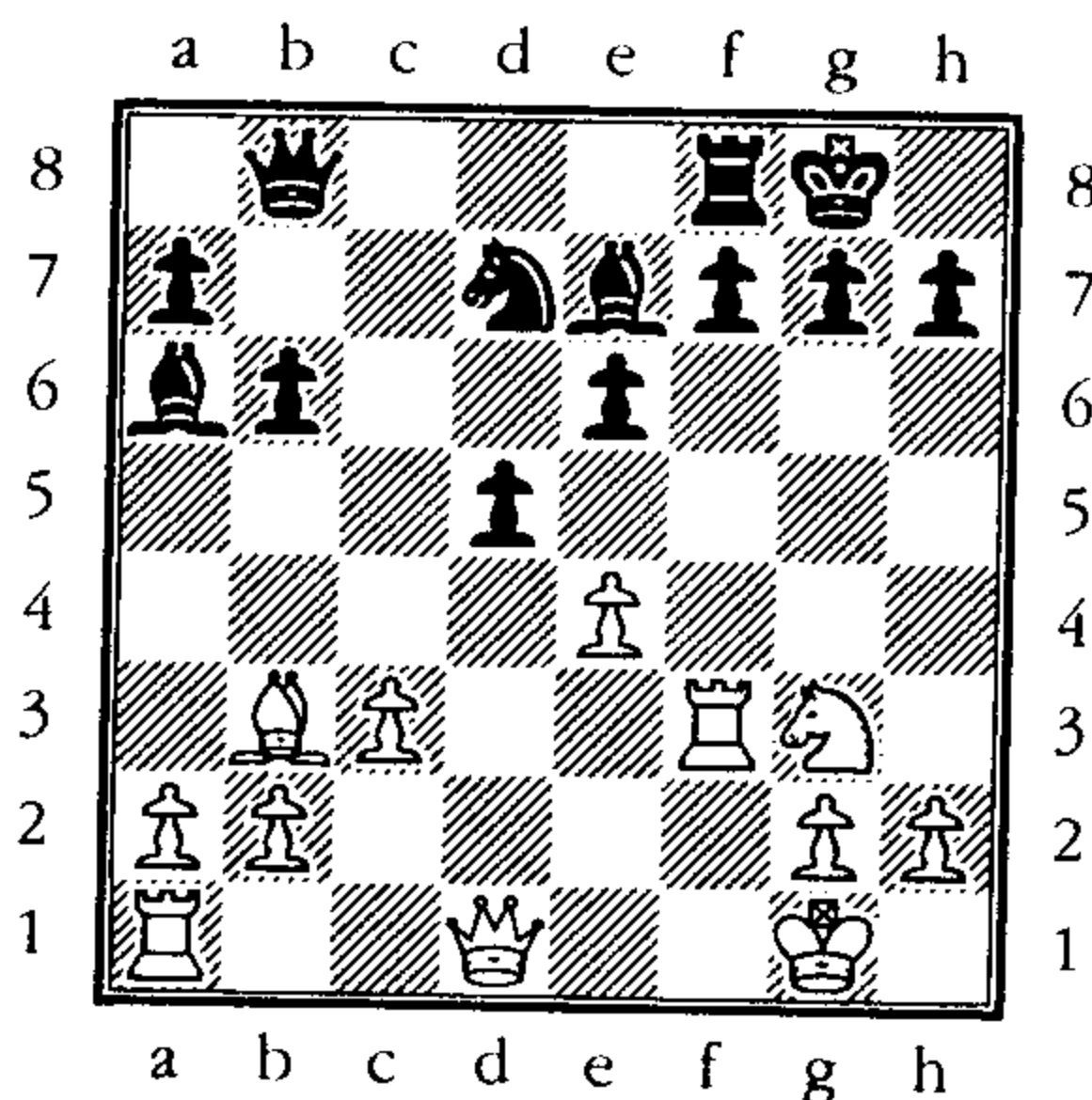
27 ♖xh5 ♙e7 28 ♙xd5 exd5



And as Black is a queen for a rook down the rest is 'just technique'.

In the following position, Black had earlier lost the exchange for a pawn but had remained solid. This is also a typical example of where the stronger player (Roy Phillips) expects things to go his way. Despite his material deficit, Black is rapidly generating activity and anticipates his opponent will soon go wrong. Because of this he overestimates his own chances and neglects to consider that his opponent too has his own ideas on the subject!

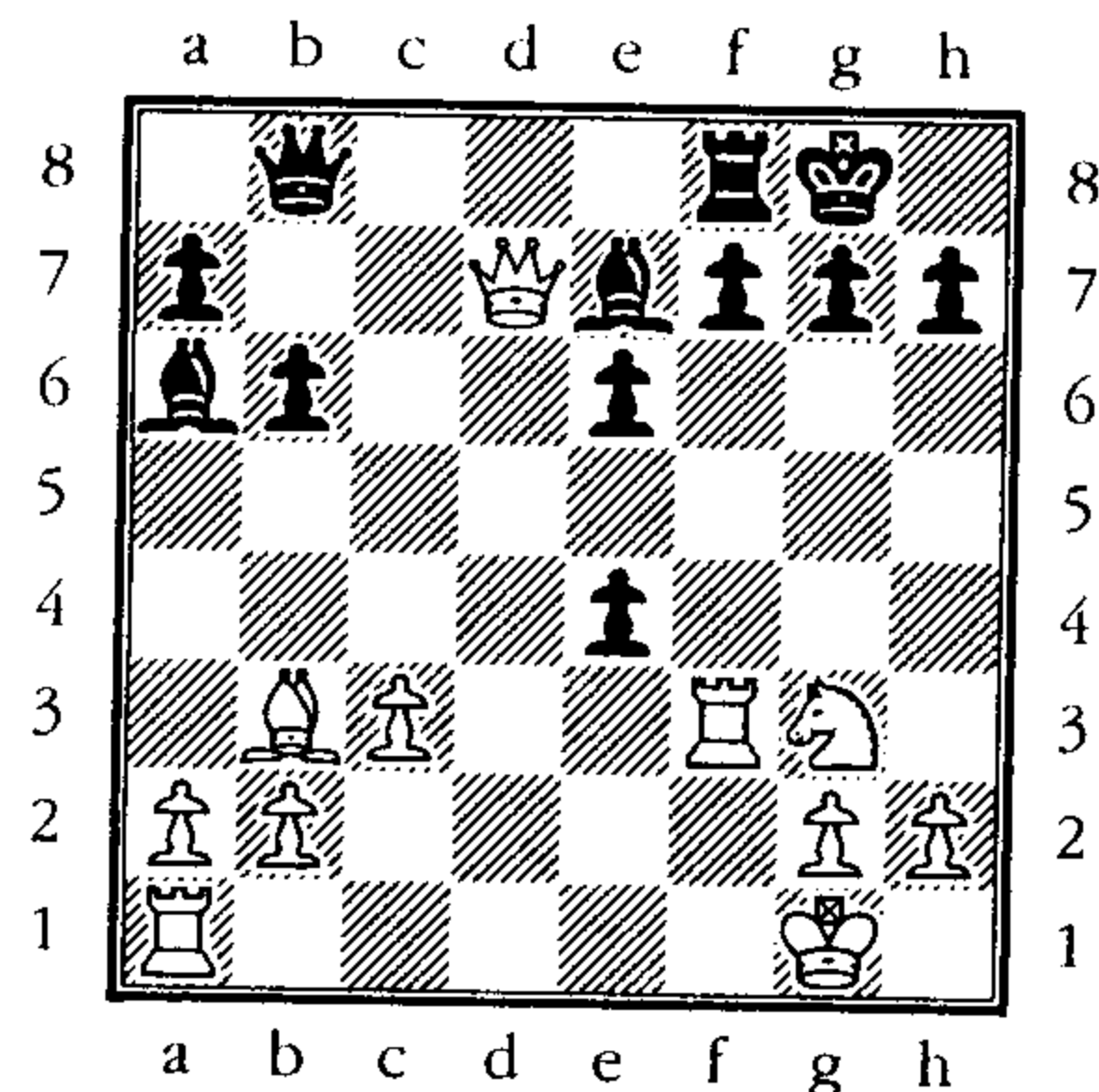
White: John Richards
Black: Roy Phillips
Bristol League Open, 1998



Here Black captured the pawn, 21...dxe4, but instead he should have seized the opportunity to win back the exchange by 21...dxe5! 22 exd5 dxf3+ 23 wxf3 dxc5+ 24 dh1 db7 25 dd1 dd8 26 de4! dxd5 27 dxd5 exd5 28 dxc5 bxc5 29 dxd5 de8! 30 wd1 which is approximately equal. But it is precisely this 'equality' that Black probably wanted to avoid—hoping for more.

22 de4

Leading to interesting complications is 22 wxd7!?



For example:

a) 22...dxc5+ 23 df2 e3 (23...dxf2+ leads to little after 24 dxf2 wf4+ 25 dg1 e3 26 wxa7 wf2+ 27 dh1 e2 28 wxa6 e1=w+ 29 dxe1 wxe1+ 30 wf1) 24 dxf7! e2+ (24...dxf7 25 dxe6 e2+ 26 dh1 wf8 27 c4!) 25 dh1 dxf7 26 dxe6 transposing to the previous note.

b) 22...exf3 23 wxe7 wf4 24 gxf3 de2! makes life interesting, e.g.

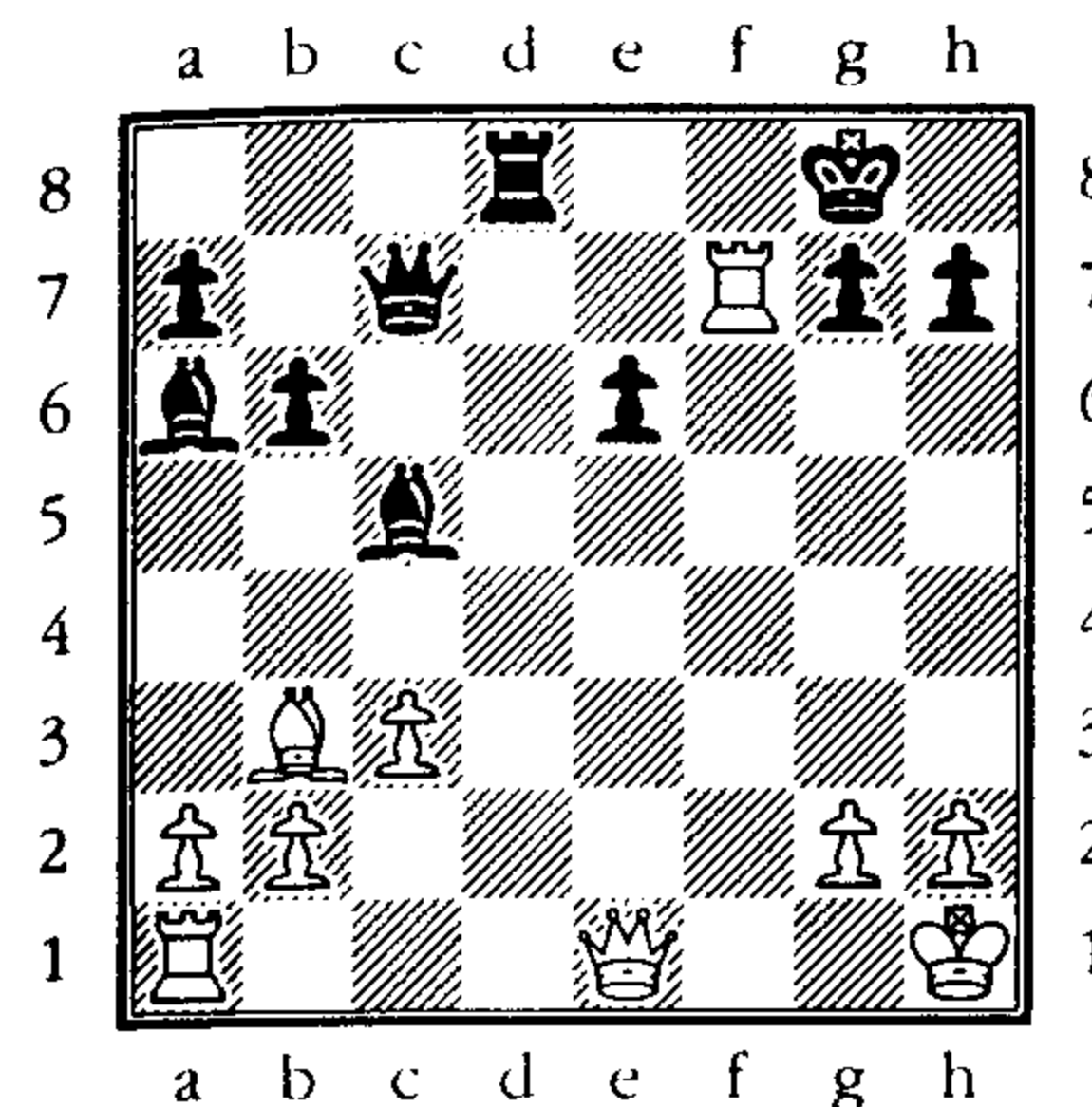
b1) 25 dxe2 we3+ 26 dg2 (26 dh1 wxf3+ 27 dg1—as 27 de1 allows 27...wh1+ xa1—27...we3+ drawing) 26...wxe2+ 27 dg3 we5+ 28 dh3 we2 and White 'should' be better but has to be very careful.

b2) 25 dd5! 25...we3+ 26 dg2 wd2 27 de4! and, despite the discovered check, Black's attack is likely to lose steam.

22...dxc5

Black hopes that exchanges will leave him with the bishop pair and a pawn for the exchange and no real weaknesses—but he misjudges the situation.

23 dxc5 dxc5+ 24 dh1 dd8 25 we1 wc7 26 dxf7!!



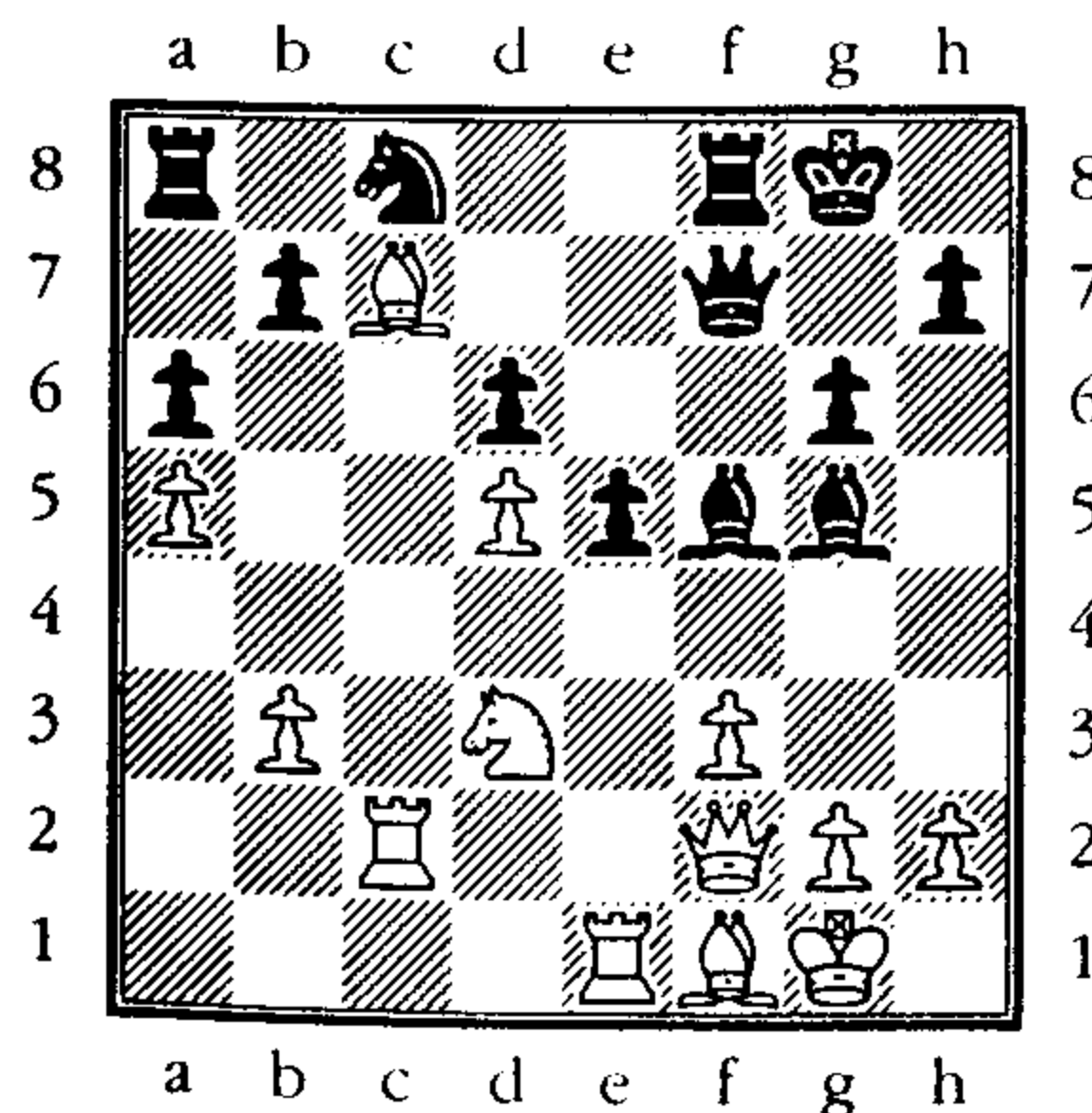
White has attacking ideas of his own!

26...dxf7

Little better is 26...wxf7 27 dxe6 or 26...wb8 27 wxe6 dh8 28 dxg7!

27 wxe6+ dh8 28 wg8+ de7 29 wf7+ dd6 30 we6 mate

White: David Collier
Black: David Buckley
Bristol League Open 1997



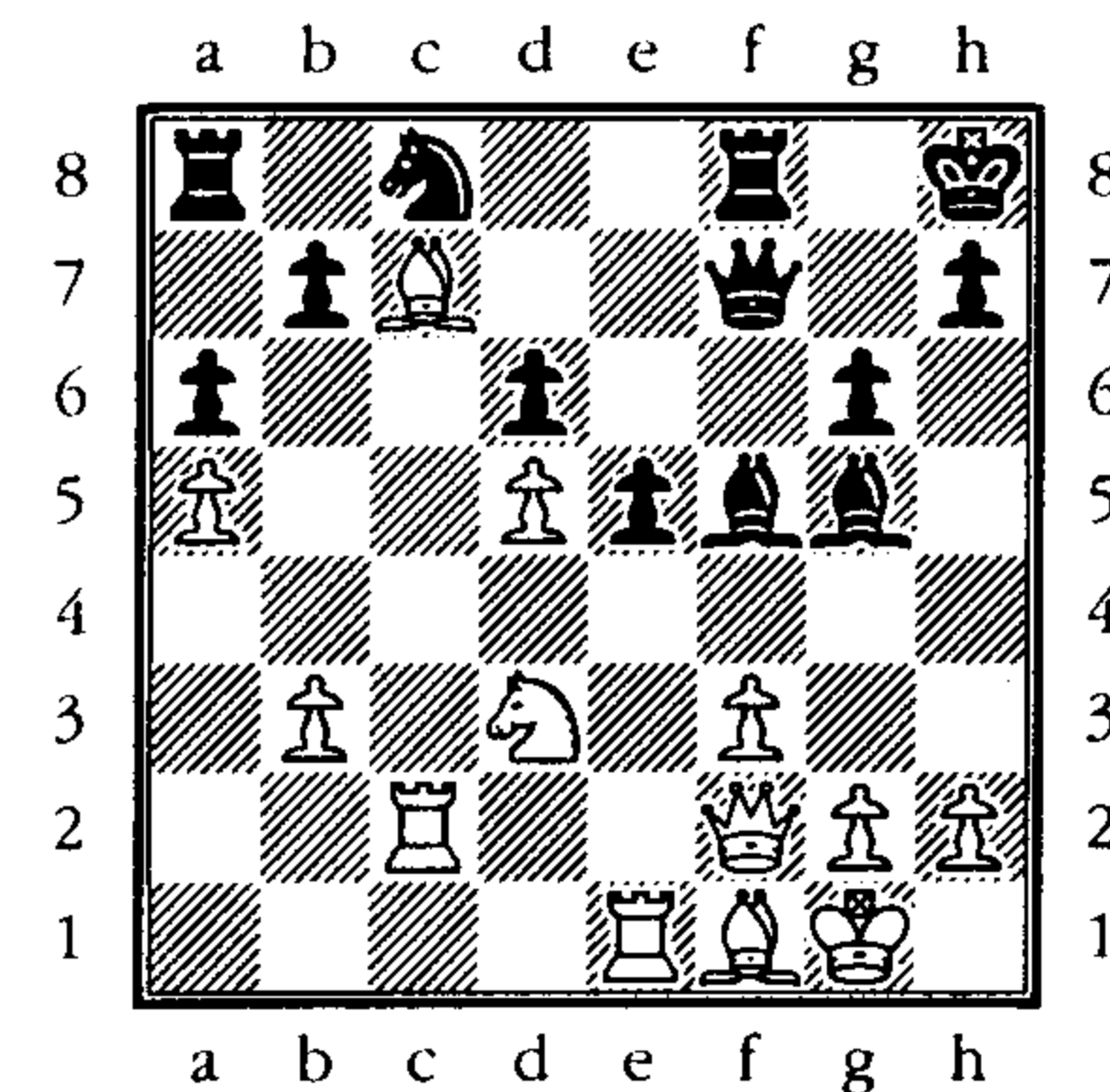
Here we have a game in which Black either didn't see or at least

didn't appreciate the potential of White's forthcoming sacrifice. Quite possibly Black had 'got it covered' previously but failed to consider the idea again later.

It is a typical King's Indian type position. White has extra space on the queenside where Black's rook placed on a8 remains undeveloped. However, in return, White's bishop on f1 is out of play and he has some long-term dark square kingside weaknesses. Both sides need to proceed with caution.

32...dh8?

32...h6, making space on h7 for the king, would have been the correct way to proceed.



33 dxe5!

Tactically exploiting Black's last move.

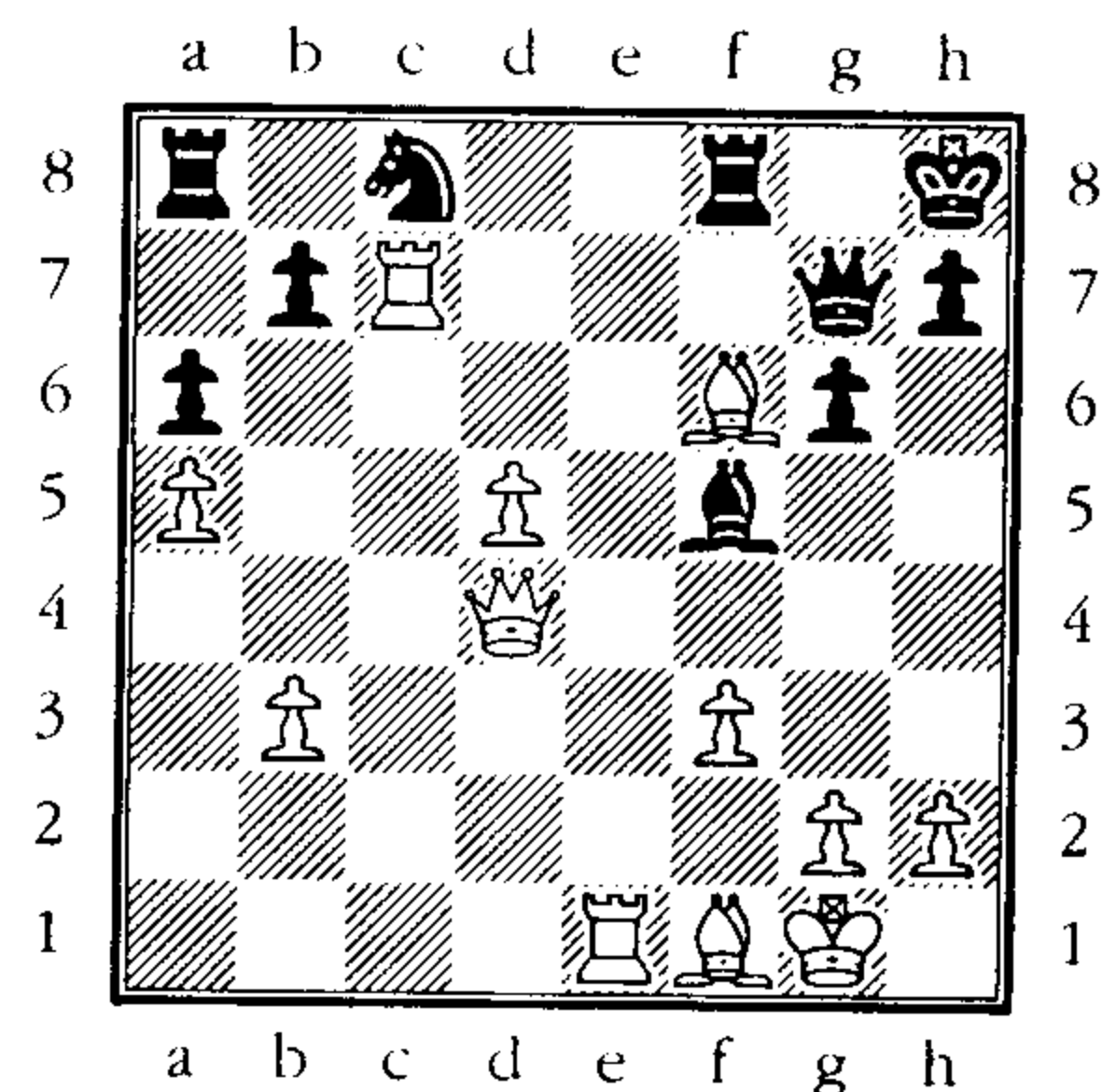
33...dxe5 34 dxe5+ df6

34...dg8 35 dc7! dd7 36 dc4 is difficult to meet.

35 dc7 wg8 36 wd4

Black's extra piece is not going to save the day.

36...wg7 37 dxf6!

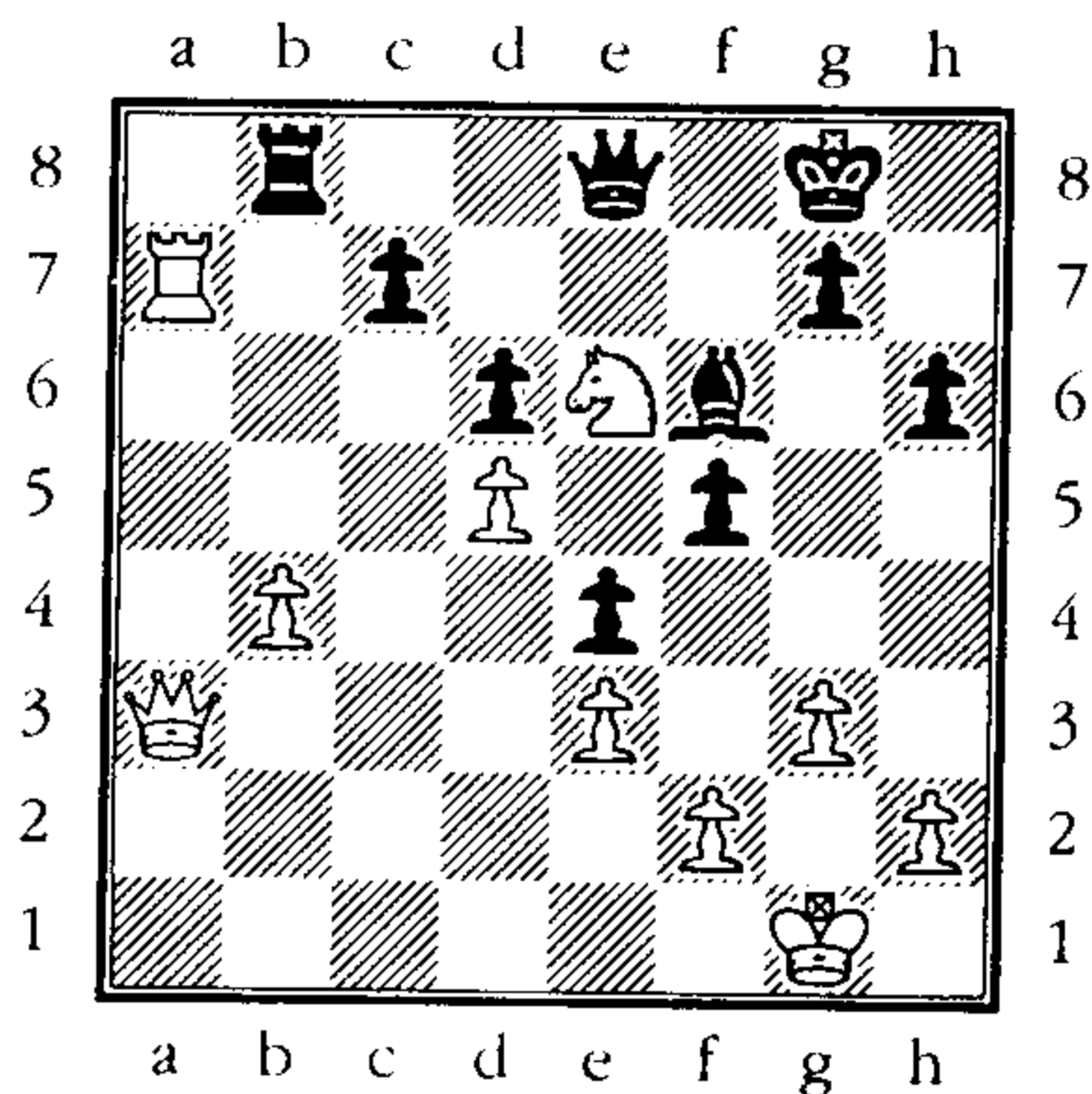


37...Rxf6

And Black resigned rather than wait for White to play 38 Re8+ (37...Rxf6 38 Rxf6+ Rxf6 39 Re8+ Rf8 40 Rxf8 mate) 38...Rf8 39 Rxf8 mate.

Now let us take a look at the following position where White has just played 34 Ra5-a7:

White: Irina Krush
Black: Nicholas Pert
Hastings Premier, 2001/2



The opening, a Classical Dutch, has left Black with problems: White's knight on e6 is well placed

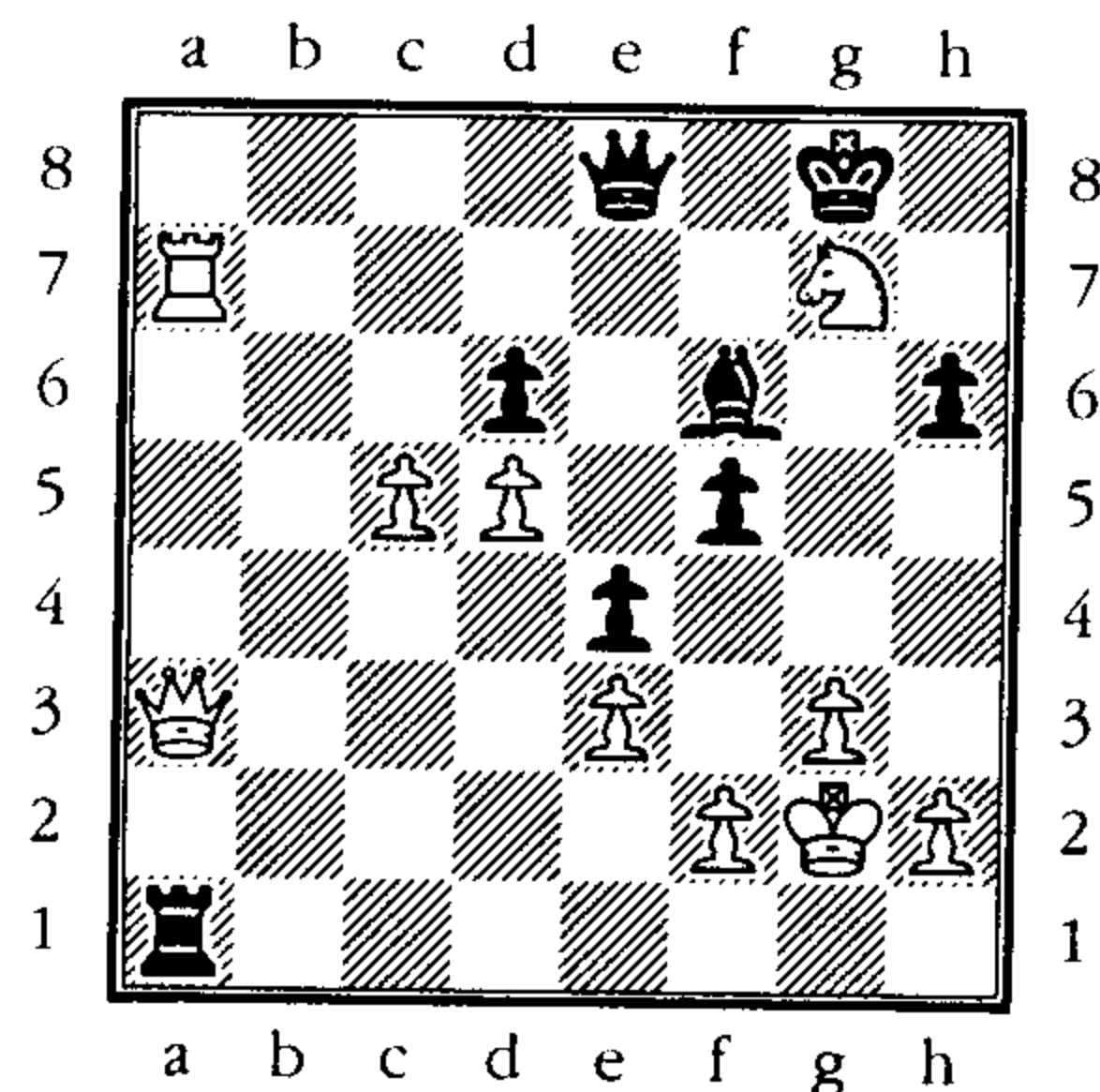
and his heavy pieces dominate the 'a'-file, moreover Black's pawn on c7 is a weakling. Any compensation Black can obtain must be based upon the light-squared weaknesses around White's castled king.

34...Wh5

Interesting is 34...c5!? with the idea of meeting 35 bxc5 with 35...Rb1+ 36 Kg2 Ra1 (whereas 36...Rb5 37 Wa6! is good for White, Black could consider 36...Wh5 37 Ra8+ Kh7 38 Qf8+ Kg8 39 Qe6+ with a perpetual) and now:

a) 37 Wxa1 37...Qxa1 38 Rxa1 dxc5 39 Ra7 g5!? (39...Wh5 40 Rg7+ Kh8 41 Rd7 Wf3+ with a perpetual) 40 Rg7+ Kh8 41 Rc7 Wh5 42 Rxc5 Wf3+ 43 Kg1 Kg8 44 Qd4! Wd1+ 45 Kg2 f4 46 d6 f3+ 47 Kh3 and Black has the problem of the 'd'-pawn to solve;

b) 37 Qxg7!

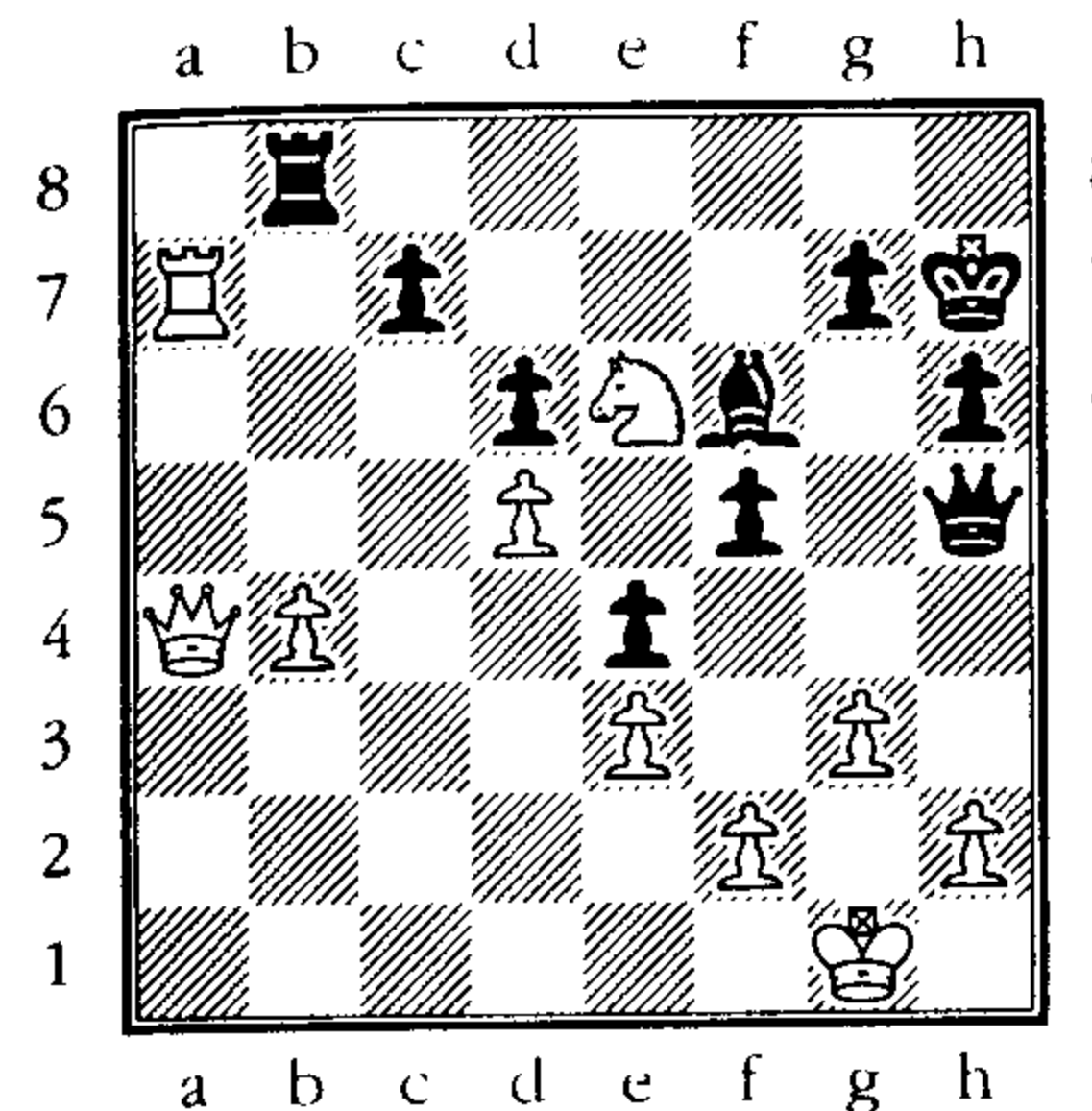


With the following possibilities:

b1) 37...Wb8 38 Qh5 Wxa7 (38...Qh8 39 Wxa1 Qxa1 40 Rxa1 dxc5 41 Ra6 White has enough compensation for the queen) 39 Qxf6+ Qf7 40 Wxa7+ Rxa7 and White is in trouble;

b2) 37...Wf8 38 Wxa1 Qxa1 39 Qe6 Wb8 40 Rxa1 dxc5 41 Rc1 when Black will have to work hard to get anything from the position.

35 Wa4 Qh7



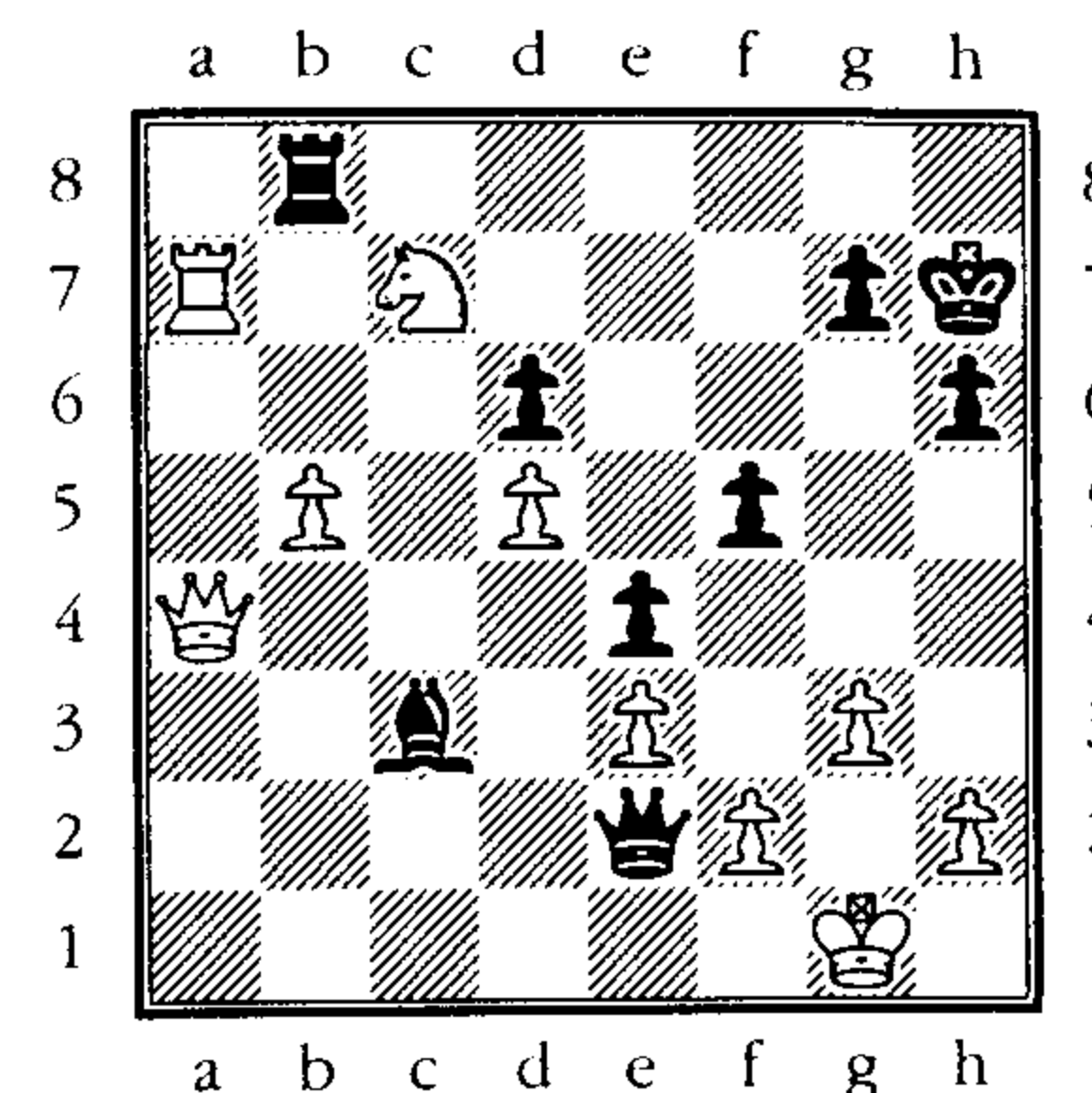
36 Qxc7?!

Not bad in itself but asking to be set up for a swindle. Alternatively White could have tried:

a) 36 Rxc7 Ra8 37 Wxa8 Wd1+ etc.;

b) 36 Qf4! Wf3 37 h3 (37 Rxc7 Ra8 38 Wxa8 Wd1+ 39 Kg2 Wf3+ 40 Kh3 Wg4+ with a draw) 37...Qe5 (37...Qc3 38 Wd7 Qe1 39 Wxf5+ Kg8 40 Ra2 Qxb4 41 We6+ Qh7 42 Wg6+ Qh8 43 Qe6 Qc3 44 Qh2 Qe5 45 Wg4! Wxg4 46 hxg4 leaves White with an endgame plus) 38 Wd7! Qxf4 39 Wxf5+ Qh8 40 Wxf4 (40 gxf4 Wd1+ 41 Qh2 We2 with a draw) 40...Rxb4 41 Wxf3 exf3 42 g4! and White is better.

36...We2 37 b5 Qc3



38 Qe6??

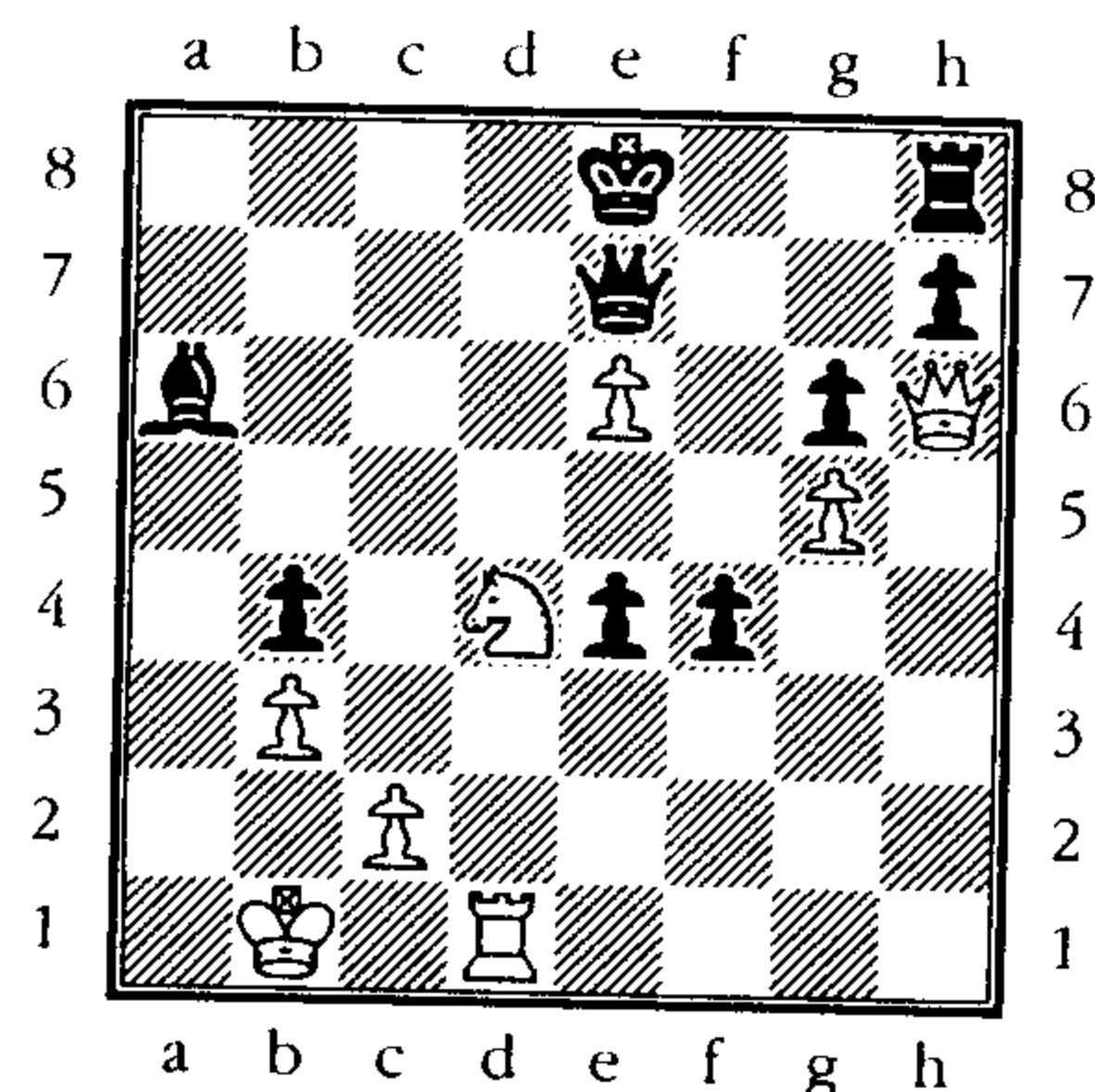
38 Wa2 Wd1+ (38...Wxa2 39 Rxa2 Rb7 40 Rc2 Qa5 41 Qe8 Rxb5 42 Qxd6 Rxd5 43 Qc4 with an ending that is likely to end in a draw) 39 Kg2 Wf3+ and a perpetual.

38...Rxb5 39 Wa2 Rb2! 0-1

White had refused to take a threefold repetition earlier in the game and this may have made it hard for her to 'adjust' from the position we started with to the one she had after 36 Qxc7, (having said this, she may well have been justified in her decision had she found 36 Qf4) but the real lesson is one of objectivity. Had she 'taken time out' after 37...Qc3 she would have realised the danger to her own king (with the knight on c7 Black's king was, at least temporarily, rock-solid) and 'copped out' with the draw resulting from 38 Wa2.

After a very tight game Richard Miles reached the following position on move 41 against me in a West Wales league match:

White: Chris Baker
Black: Richard Miles
Monmouth vs. Abergavenny
West Wales League 1998

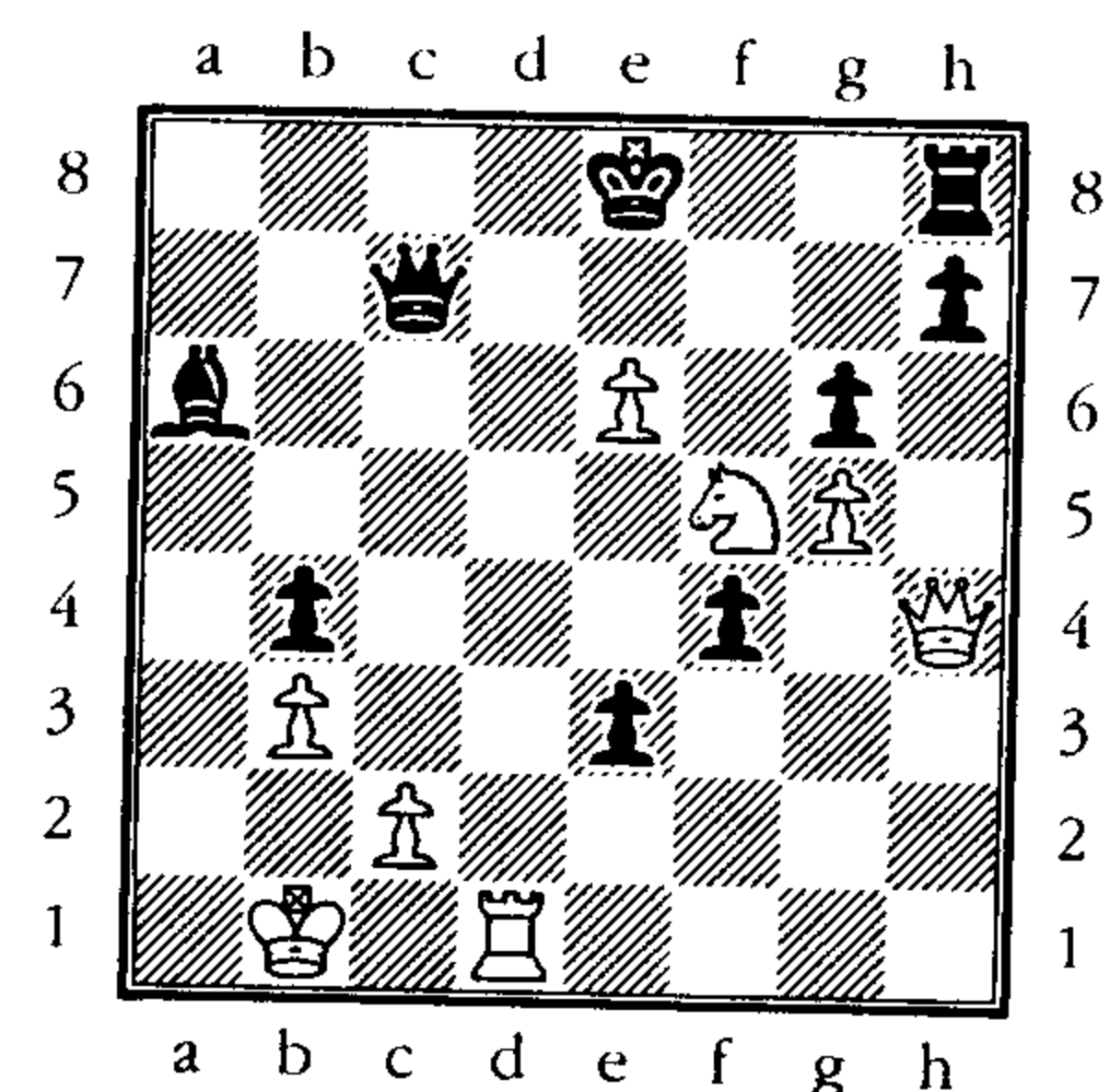


Here Black had a big decision to make and had he seen all of the consequences he would probably have opted for the critical variation.

41...♖c7

41...e3! leads to massive complications after 42 ♖h4, i.e.

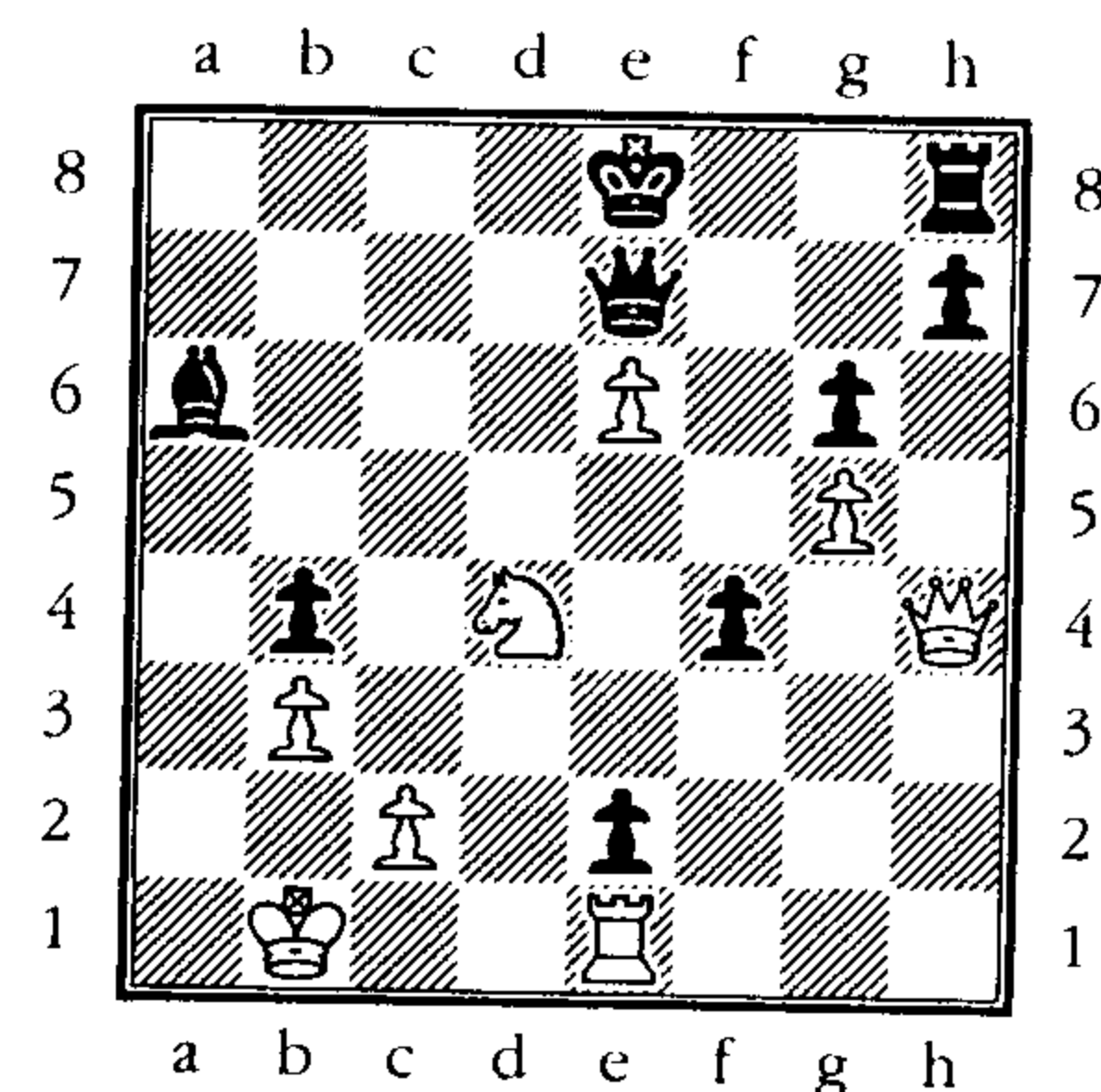
a) 42...♖c7 43 ♘f5!! and now:



a1) 43...gxf5 44 ♖h5+ ♔f8 45 ♖h6+ ♔e8 (45...♔g8 46 ♖d7 ♖xd7 47 exd7 ♔f7 48 ♖f6+ mates) 46 ♖d7 ♖xd7 47 exd7+ ♔xd7 48 ♖g7+ ♔c6 49 ♖f6+ wins;

a2) 43...e2 44 ♖d7 ♖xd7 45 exd7+ ♔xd7 46 ♘d4 ♖e8 47 ♘xe2 ♔xe2 48 ♖xf4 and, with further pawns dropping, White will win;

b) 42...e2 43 ♖e1 and again Black has choices:

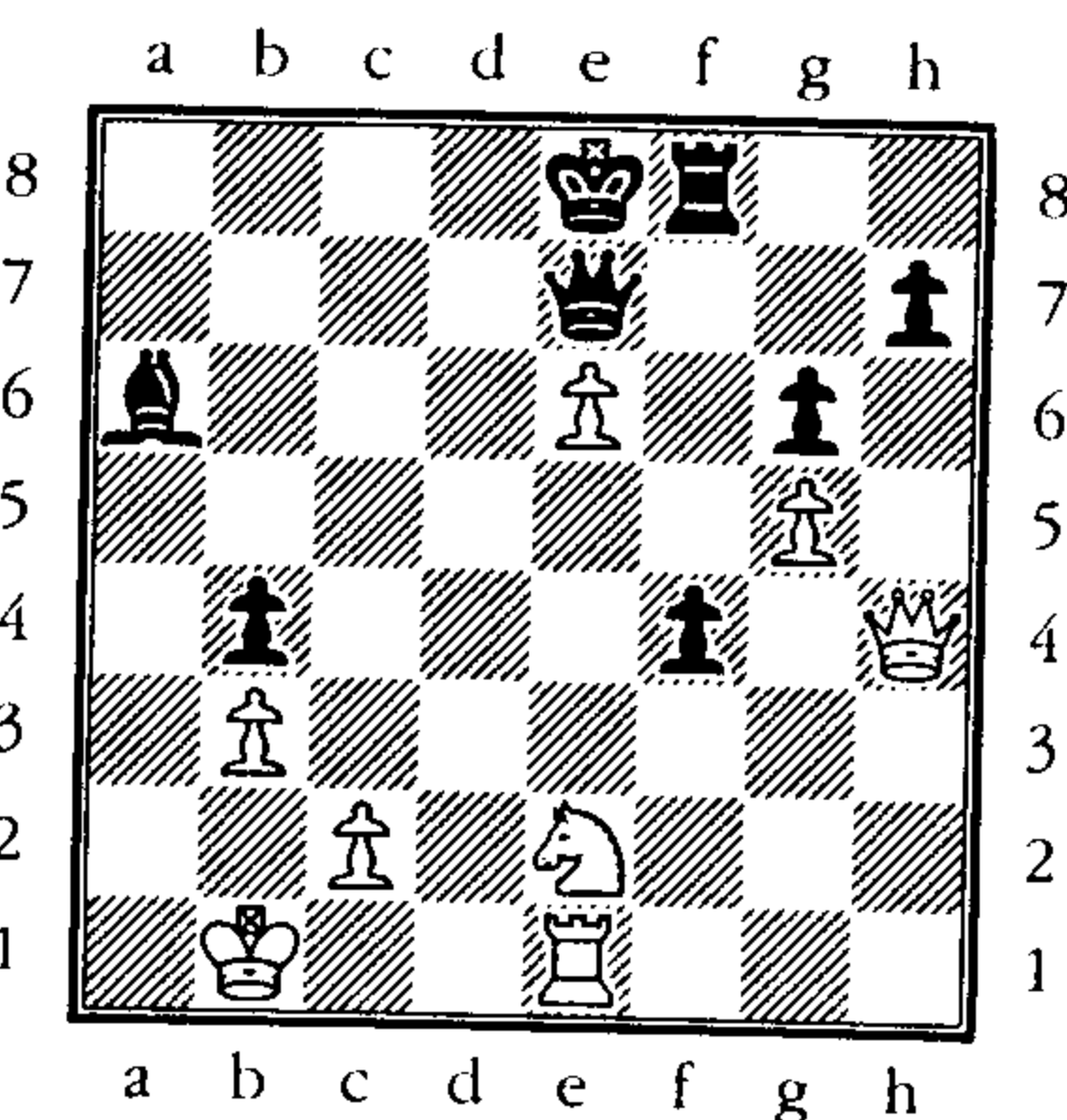


b1) 43...♖d6 44 ♘xe2 ♔xe2 45 ♖xe2 ♖d1+ 46 ♔b2 ♖xe2 47 ♖xf4 with a further branch:

b11) 47...♖f8 48 ♖b8+ ♔e7 49 ♖xb4+ ♔xe6 (49...♔e8 50 ♖a4+ ♔e7 51 ♖d7 mate) 50 ♖xf8 ♖e5+ drawing.

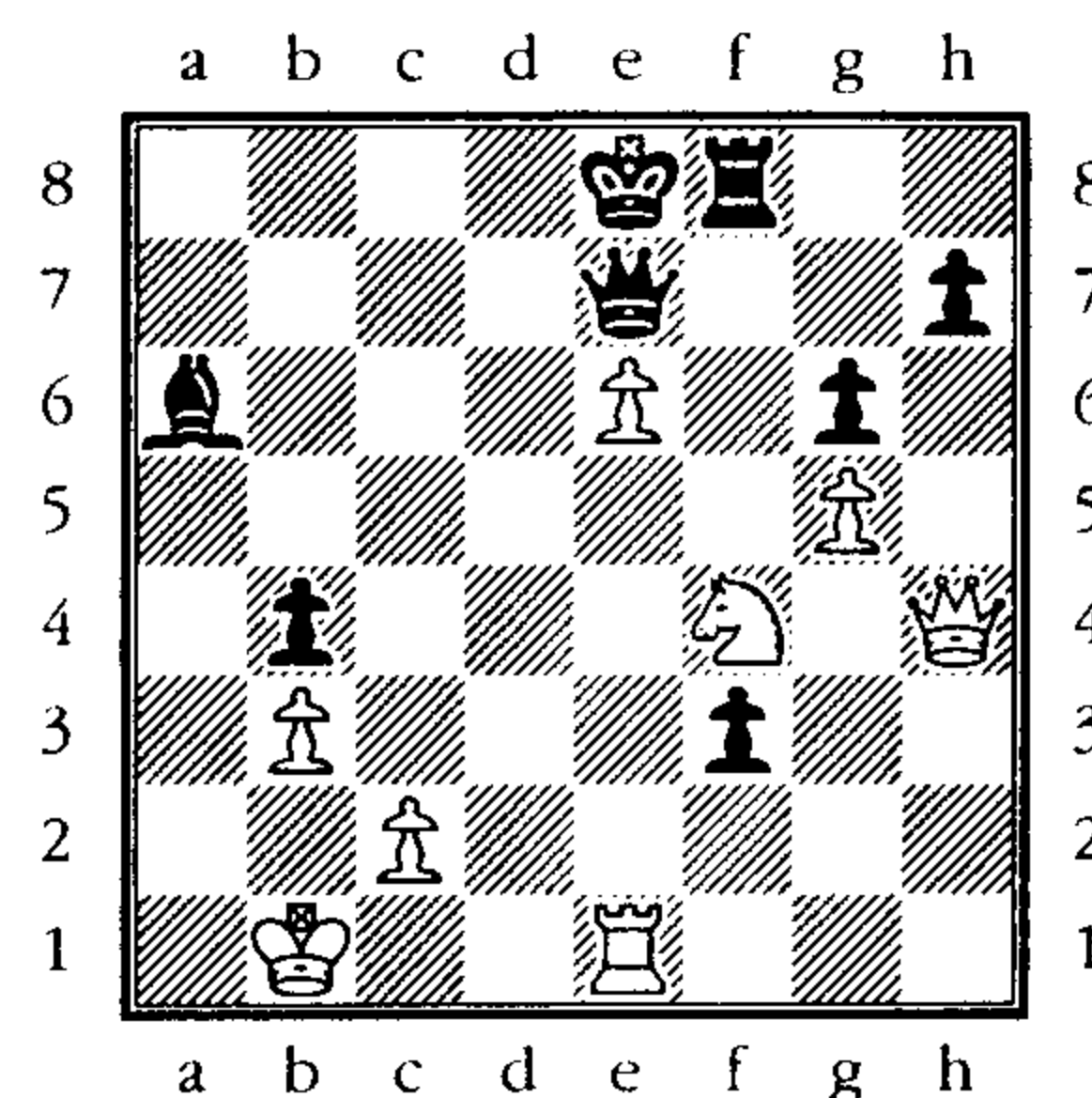
b12) 47...♖xe6 48 ♖b8+ ♔d7 49 ♖xh8 ♖e7 and the position is level.

b2) 43...♖f8 44 ♘xe2 and now:



b21) 44...♔xe2 45 ♖xe2 ♖f5 46 ♖f2 (46 ♖e4 ♖xg5! 47 ♖xf4 ♖g1+ 48 ♔b2 ♖a7! 49 ♖f7+ ♖xf7 50 exf7+ ♔xf7 51 ♖xb4 h5 and having the first move in the rook + two connected passed pawns race Black has the advantage) 46...♖c5 (46...♖xg5 47 ♖b6! is dangerous for Black to meet) 47 ♖f3 ♖g1+ 48 ♔b2 ♖d4+ 49 ♔b1 with a draw.

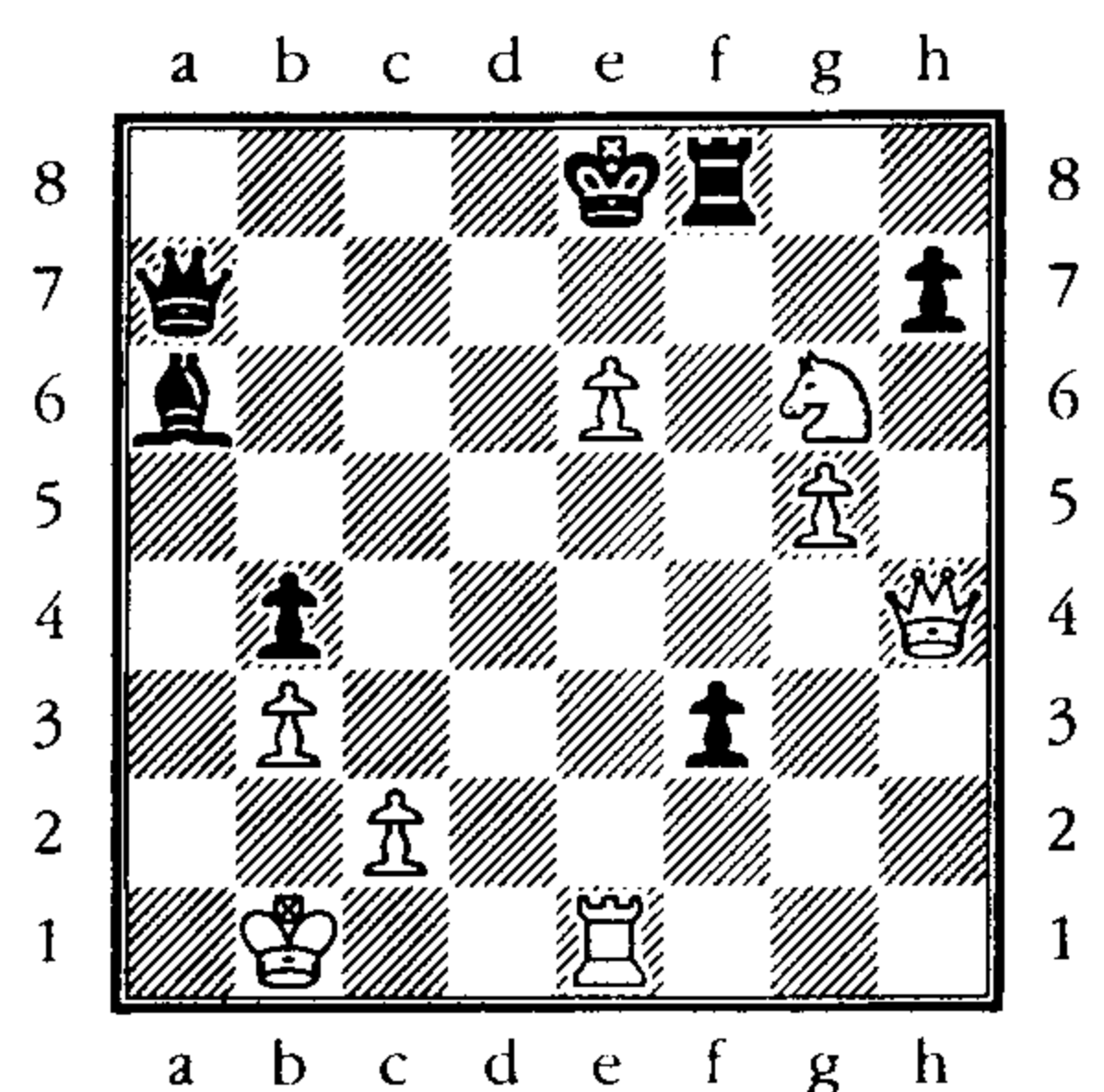
b22) after 44...f3 45 ♘f4



the complications continue with:

b221) 45...♖f5? 46 ♖d1 ♖xg5 47 ♖xh7 ♖xf4 48 ♖d7+ ♔f8 49 ♖h1 ♔g8 (49...♖e7 50 ♖h8+ ♔g7 51 ♖xe7+ ♔xh8 52 ♖d8+ ♔g7 53 ♖c7+ followed by....

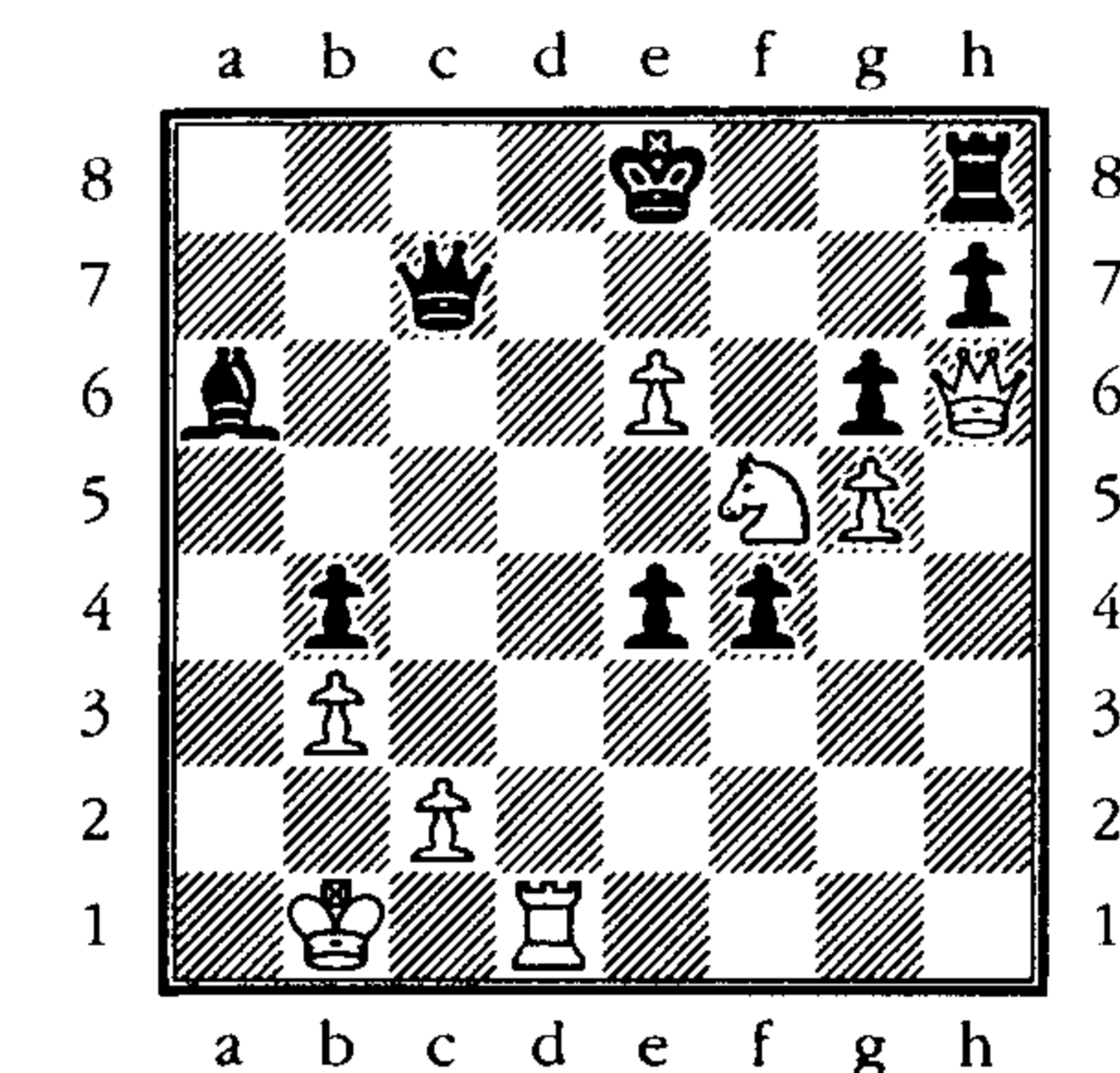
b222) 45...♖a7 46 ♘xg6!! and again Black has two choices:



b2221) 46...hgx6 47 e7 ♖g8 (47...♖xe7 48 ♖xe7+ ♔xe7 49 ♖e4+ ♔d7 50 ♖d5+ ♔e7 51 ♖e5+ ♔d7 52 ♖g7+ ♔e8 53 ♖xg6+ ♔e7 54 ♖xa6 f2 55 ♖f1 and White will eventually win) 48 ♖h7! winning.

b2222) 46...f2 47 ♘xf8! fxe1=♖+ 48 ♖xe1 ♔xf8 49 ♖xb4+ ♖e7 (49...♔e8 50 ♖c3!) 50 ♖c3 (White must keep the queens on) 50...♔g8 (50...♖xe6 51 ♖h8+ ♔e7 52 ♖xh7+ ♔e8 53 g6 White has the better chances) 51 ♖c6 ♔b7 52 ♖c4 with an unclear position.

42 ♘f5!!



42...gxf5

A good practical try would have been 42...♔d3! 43 cxd3 ♖c3 44 ♘d6+ ♔e7 45 ♘xe4 ♖xb3+ 46 ♔c1 ♖a3+ (46...♖c8+ 47 ♔d2 ♖b2+ 48 ♔e1 and the white king has found a safe haven) 47 ♔d2 ♖b2+ 48 ♔e1 f3 49 ♖d2 ♖d4 50 ♖h2 and Black is in trouble.

43 ♖h5+

Even stronger is the immediate 43 ♖d7 when after 43...♖xd7 44 exd7+ ♔xd7 45 ♖g7+ Black's position is hopeless.

43...♔f8 44 ♖d7 ♖xd7 45 exd7 ♔e7 46 g6! f3 47 g7 ♖g8 48 ♖e8+!

♖xe8 49 dxe8=♖+ ♔xe8 50 g8=♖+ ♔e7 51 ♜xh7+ 1-0

A hard game and one in which I needed to keep my wits about me!

11) Losing the initiative

I've had many games where my opening has been quite good, (or at least satisfactory!) where I've built up a decent position and won a pawn, only to find I've got problems due to the fact that my opponent's pieces have suddenly become very active, that my king seems a little unsafe and that I can't seem to form a decent plan which doesn't involve giving back the material (sometimes with interest!). My conclusion: I stand worse. So what went wrong? It was all down to the fact that I conceded something less tangible than material—I gave up the initiative. Instead, by 'turning the screw' still further, rather than grabbing the first pawn that came to hand, I could make my opponent's position so difficult that he would probably fold. This was once confirmed to me in a 'post mortem' analysis when my opponent told me that he was relieved when I took the pawn because he was far more scared of x, y and z and when we looked at the alternatives I realised how right he was. If only he had told me this during the game! So my advice is not to sell out your position too cheaply, to consider other options and to decide what move 'appeals' to you the most.

Once in a while there is a game which is full of 'incident' and therefore deserves to be looked at in its

entirety—the following is one such game. Black had his 'moment', albeit briefly, which demonstrates how a player must be constantly alert to the one 'big punch' he may have at his disposal.

White: Harry Lamb
Black: Mark Furnevall
Hanham Open 1997
King's Indian Defence

1 ♖f3 ♖f6 2 g3 g6 3 ♗g2 ♗g7 4 0-0 0-0 5 c4 d6 6 d4 c5

6...♖c6 leads to the Panov variation.

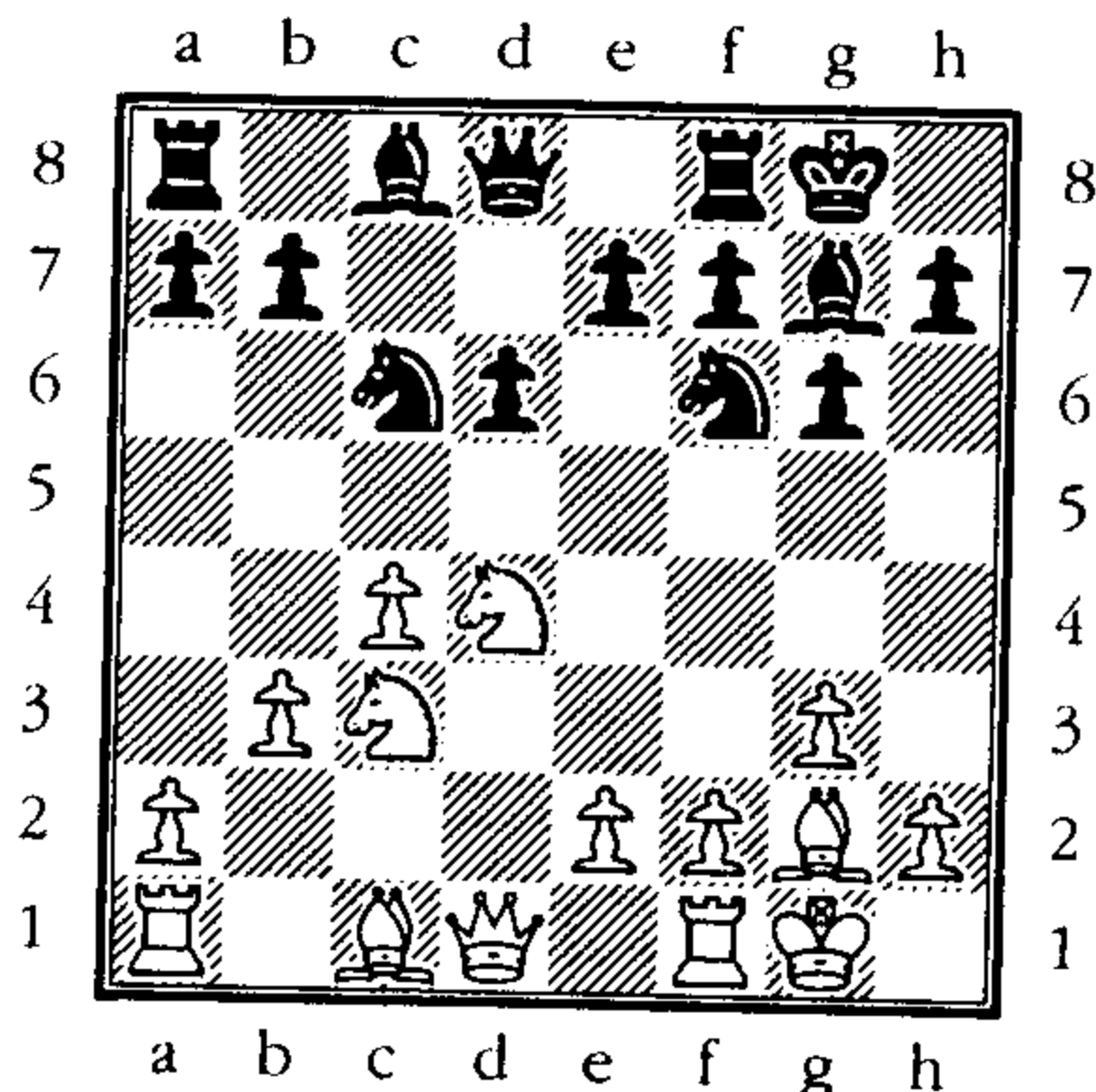
7 ♖c3 ♖c6

Black can also capture 7...cxd4.

8 b3

Also perfectly viable is the advance 8 d5.

8...cxd4 9 ♖xd4

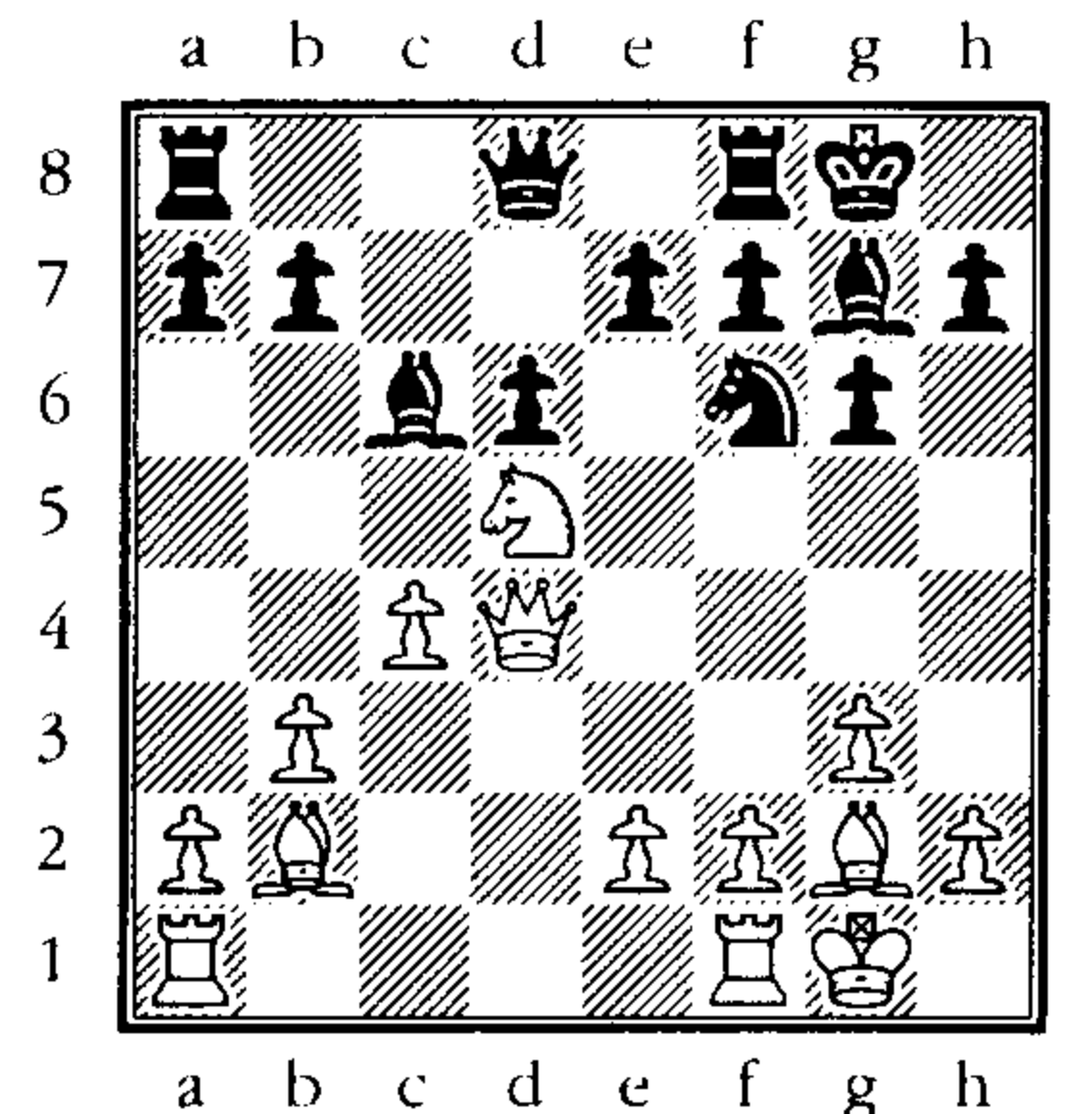


9...♗d7

L.Vadasz-G.Khechumyan, Budapest, 1998, saw an interesting attempt by Black to achieve immediate equality by utilising a

pin on the 'd'-file after 9...♖xd4 10 ♜xd4 d5!? 11 cxd5 (11 ♖d1!?) 11...♗e6 12 ♗f4 ♖xd5 13 ♗e5 ♖xc3 14 ♜xc3 ♖c8 15 ♜e3 ♗xe5 16 ♜xe5.

10 ♗b2 ♖xd4 11 ♜xd4 ♗c6 12 ♖d5

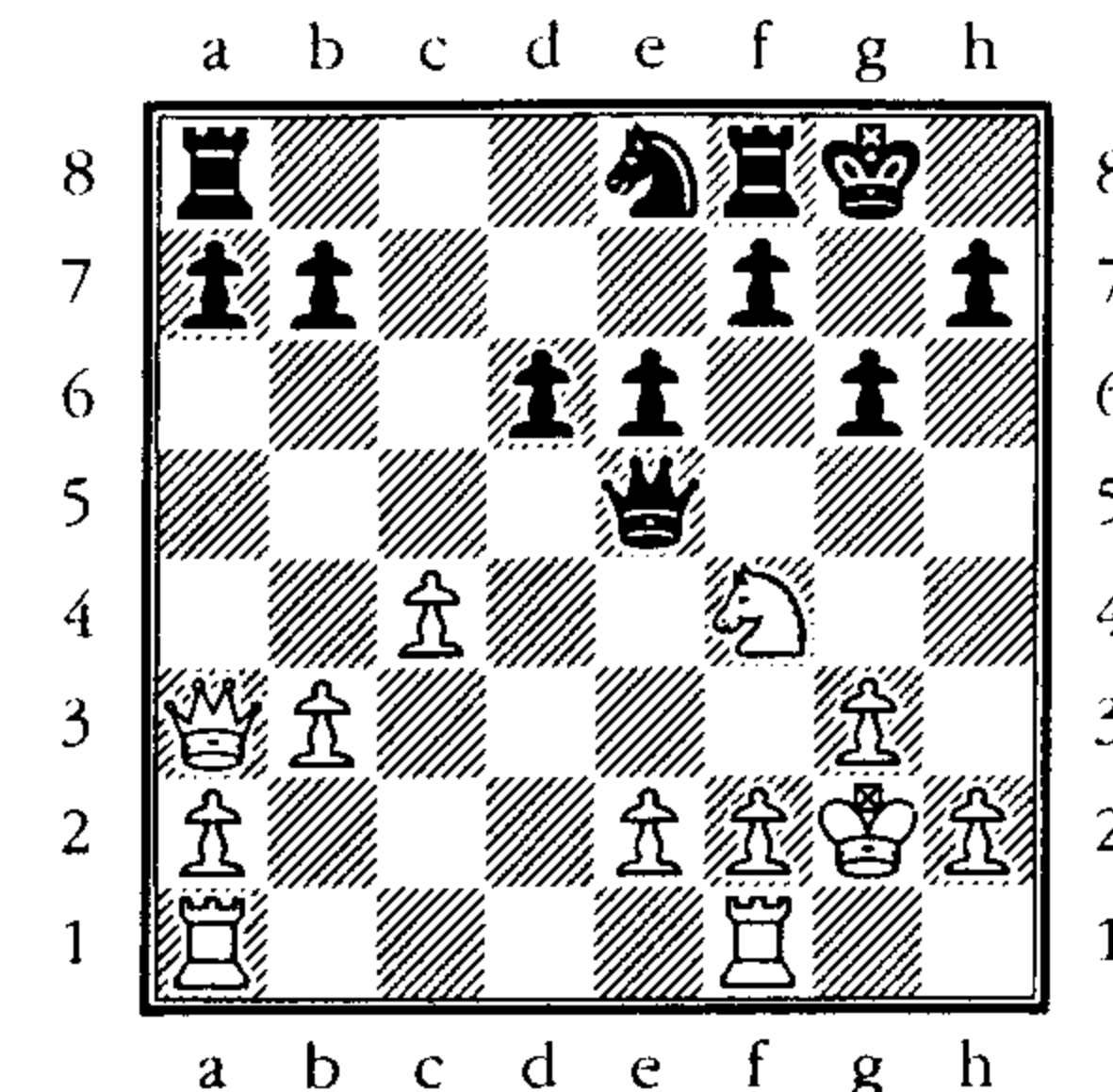


White not only attempts to cause Black problems along the a1-h8 diagonal—since if the knight on f6 moves to a square not protecting g7 then ♜d4xg7 would be mate—but plans to exchange off Black's 'pride and joy', his dark-squared bishop. It may seem tempting for Black to play 12...♗xd5 but generally the kind of positions that would result after 13 cxd5 ♖e8 14 ♜d2 ♗xb2 15 ♜xd2 would slightly favour White on the grounds of his extra space and the fact that he can cover the d4 square with the move e2-e3, thereby making it difficult for Black's knight to take up a decent outpost.

12...♖e8 13 ♜d2 ♗xb2 14 ♜xb2 e6 15 ♖f4 ♜f6 16 ♜a3

16 ♜d2, covering most of the squares, is the most logical approach to the position.

16...♗xg2 17 ♔xg2 ♜e5

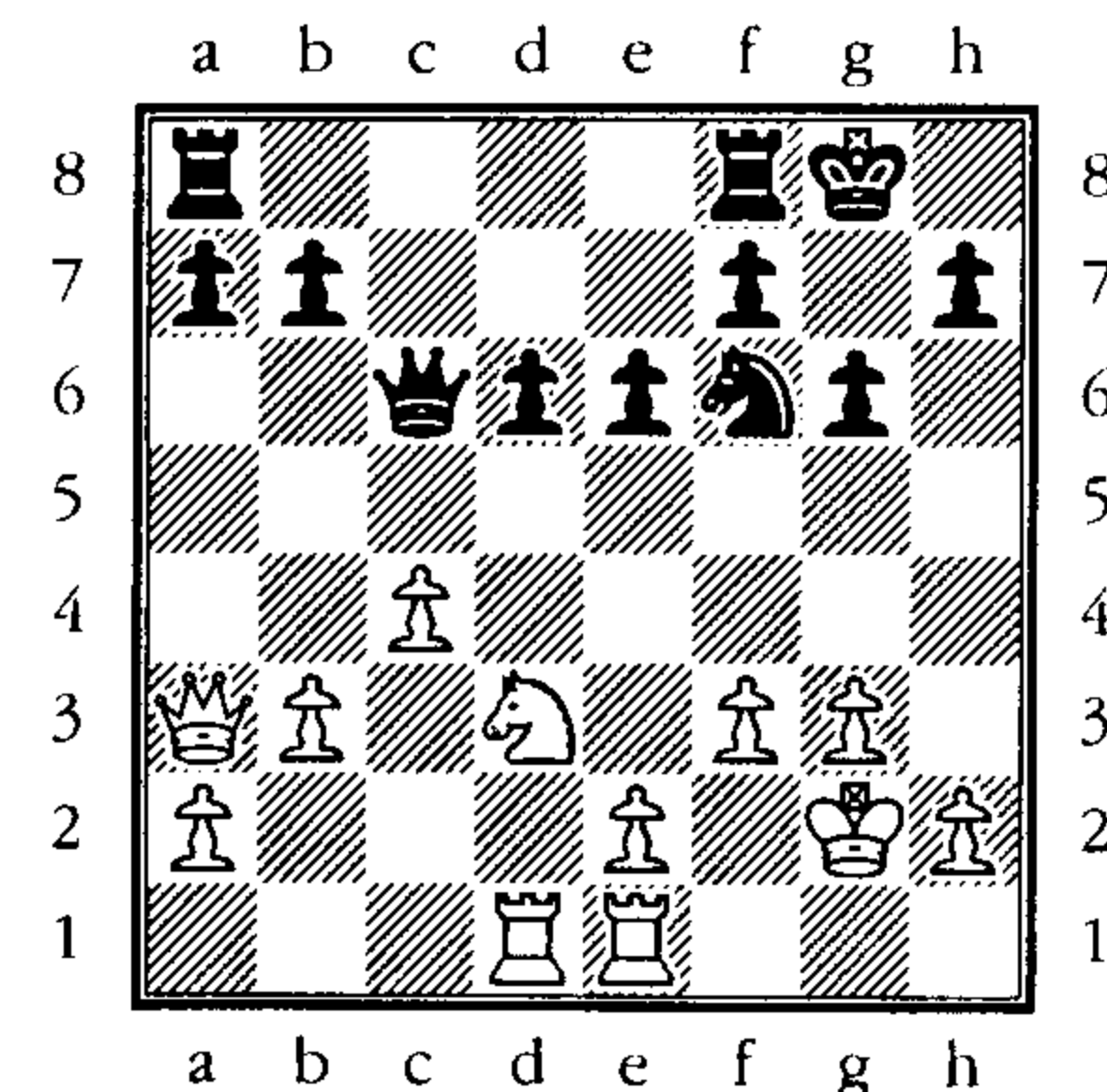


Attempting not only to release the knight on e8 from its defensive duties—so that it can once more join in the fun!—but also to threaten ...g6-g5 followed by ...♜e5xe2.

18 ♖fe1 ♖f6 19 ♖d3

A good move as it 'hassles' the black queen at a time when it is still required to defend d6.

19...♜e4+ 20 f3 ♜c6 21 ♖ad1



To sum up—White has completed development and, apart from a potential weakness on e3, he has a sound set-up. On the other hand Black is a little cramped and needs to gain some activity, possibly with a well-timed ...d6-d5 break.

21...♖fd8

In fact the time was right for 21...d5! as after 22 ♖e7 (22 ♖b2 dxc4!? 23 ♖xf6 cxd3 24 ♖xd3 ♖c2 25 a3 ♖ac8 26 b4 e5! 27 ♖d7 ♖c7 and Black has a 'comfortable' position) 22...♙g7 23 ♘e5 (the attempt to win a pawn with 23 ♘b4?! fails to 23...♖b6 24 cxd5? ♖fe8 winning) 23...♖a6 Black has achieved approximate equality.

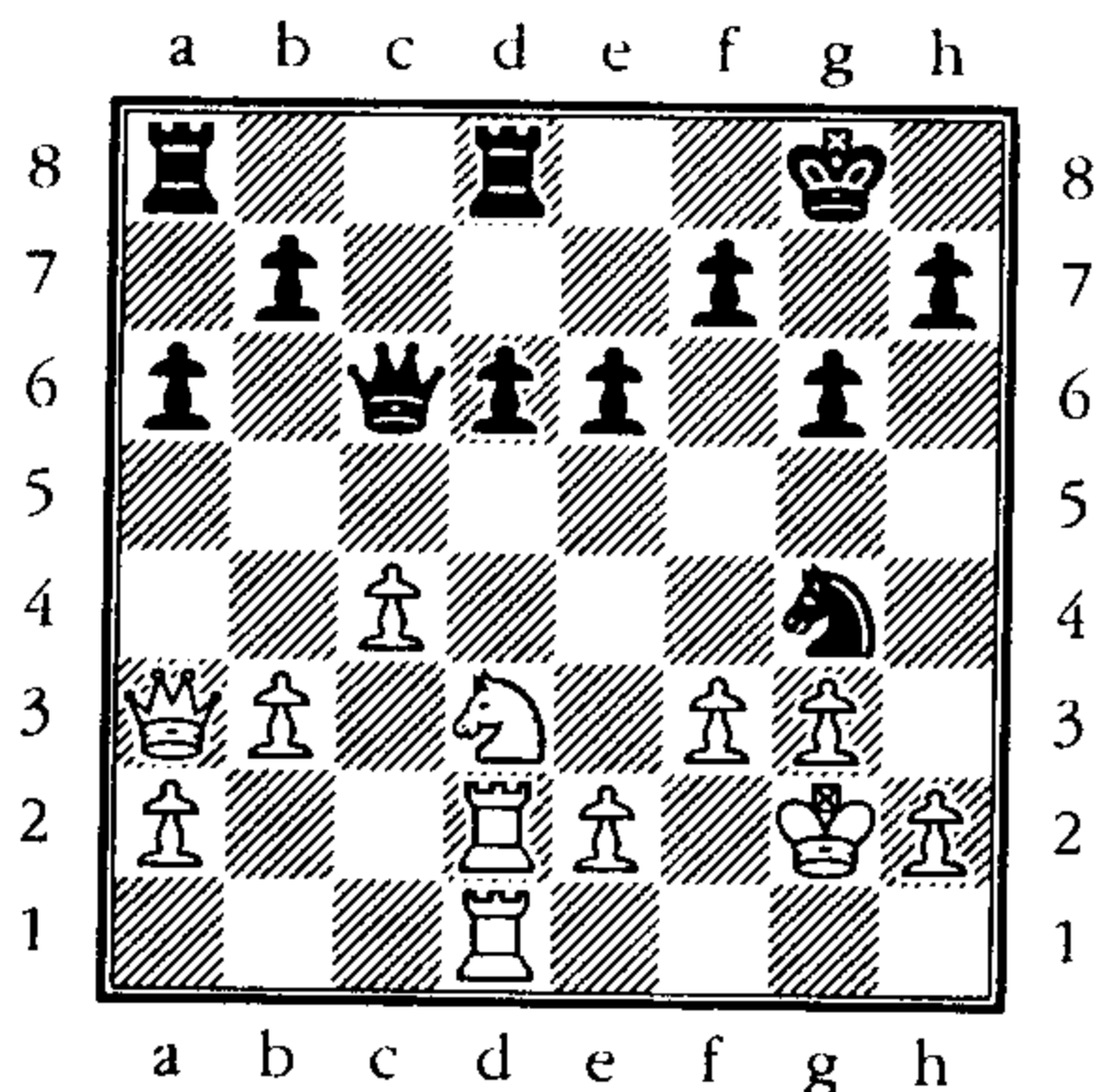
22 ♖d2 a6

22...d5!?

23 ♖ed1

23 e4! would not only prevent Black's reply but would also strengthen his grip on d5, while 23...d5!? leads to some interesting play after the self-pin with 24 ♘b4 ♖c5 25 exd5 exd5 26 ♖ed1.

23...♘g4!



Black utilises the pin on the h1-a8 diagonal in an attempt to exploit the weakness on e3.

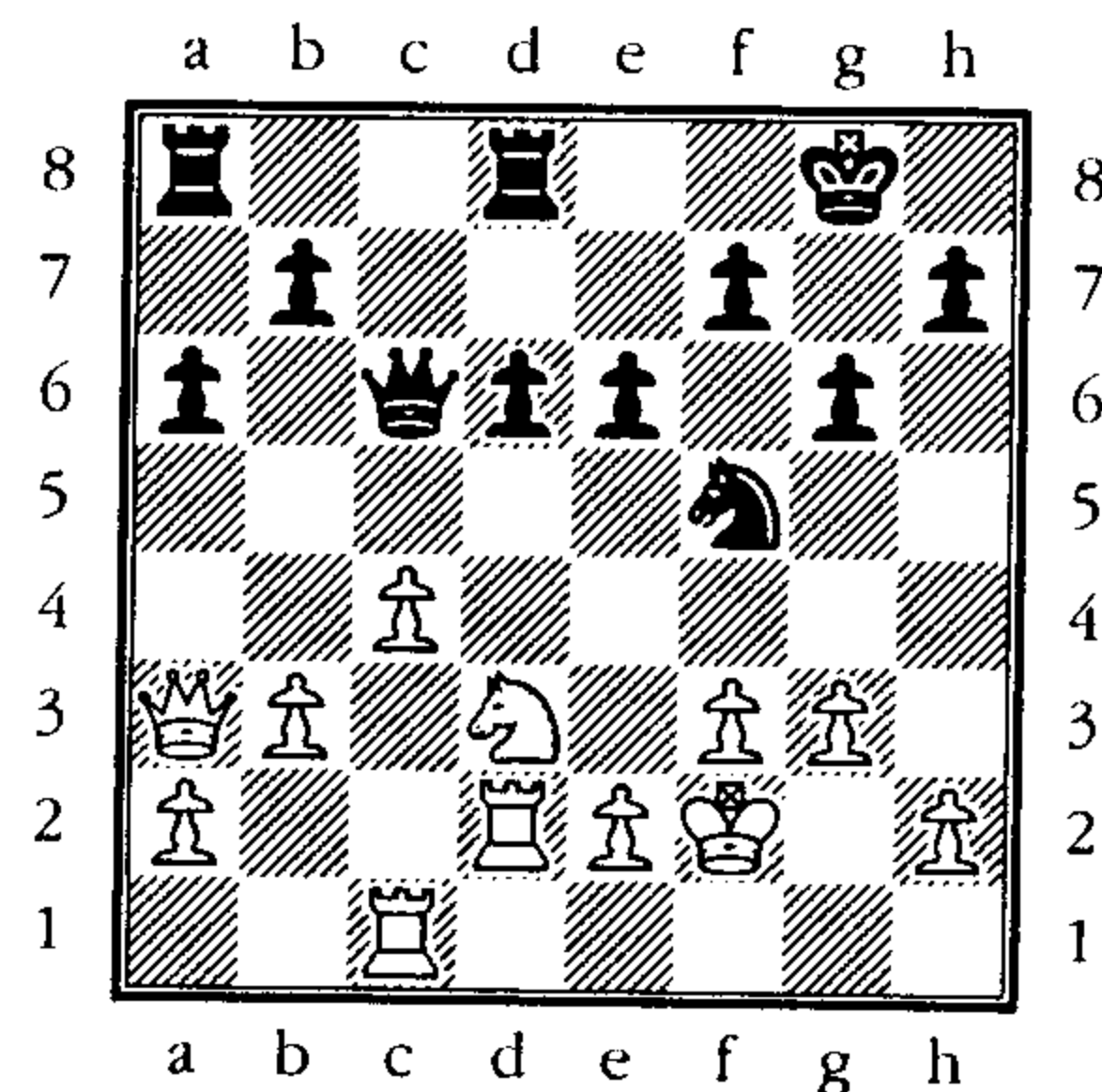
24 ♖c1 ♘e3+

Interesting is 24...♖ac8!? 25 e4 ♘e3+ 26 ♙h1 (26 ♙f2 ♖b6 27 c5? dxc5 28 ♙xe3 c4+ 29 ♙e2 ♖xd3 30 ♖xd3 cxd3+ 31 ♙xd3 ♖d8+ 32 ♙e2 ♖d4 and White has difficulties due

to his king safety) 26...b5! 27 ♖e2 bxc4 28 ♘f4 (28 ♖xe3 ♖b6!) 28...♖b6 29 ♖ce1 e5 (29...cxb3? 30 ♖xe3 b2 31 ♖b1 ♖c2 32 ♖c3 and Black has insufficient play for the piece) 30 ♘h3 d5! 31 exd5! (31 ♖xe3? d4 32 ♖3e2 d3 33 ♖g2 c3 and Black's connected passed pawns dominate the board) 31...♘d5 32 bxc4 ♖xc4 33 ♖xe5 ♙g7 and the game is dynamically poised.

25 ♙f2 ♘f5

Black has 'sold cheap' one of his 'trump' cards—...♘f6-g4-e3+.



26 e3

White could have also tried pushing the pawn one square further, e.g. 26 e4!? ♘d4 27 ♖cd1 e5 28 ♘f4! b5 29 ♘d5 ♖c5 30 b4 ♖a7 31 cxb5 axb5 (31...♘xb5+ 32 ♖e3 leads to an ending which favours White e.g. 32...♖xe3+ 33 ♙xe3 ♘d4 34 f4 ♖ab8 35 a3) 32 ♖e3 ♖a3 with approximate equality.

26...h5!?

26...♖ac8 is the solid approach.

27 ♖b2 ♖b6 28 ♖e2

28 ♖e1, keeping one rook on the 'd'-file for future action, is more accurate.

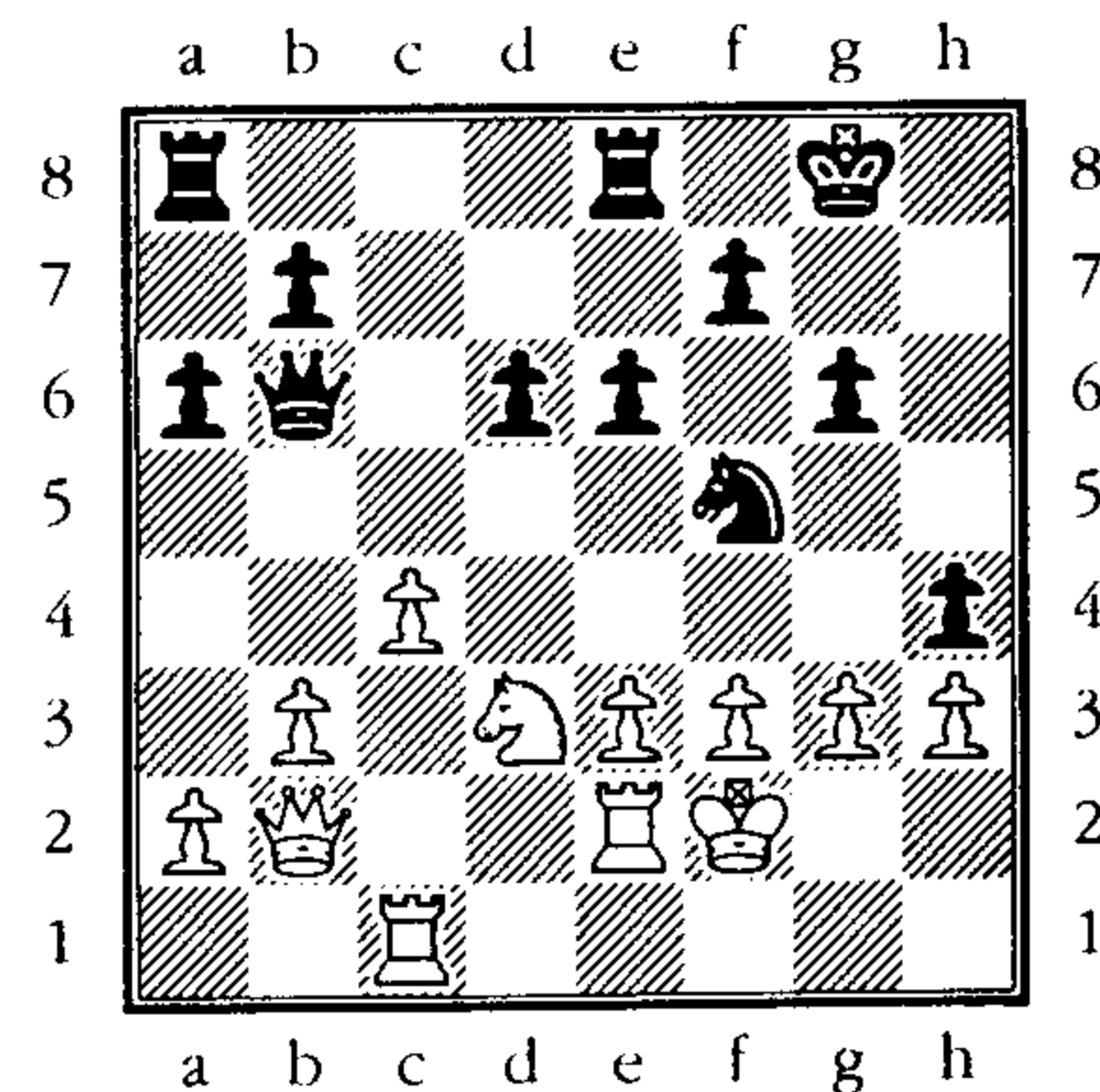
28...♖e8

28...d5! 29 cxd5 exd5 30 ♘c5 d4 equalises and exploits White's previous inaccuracy.

29 h3

While tempting, the move 29 c5?! causes White to 'over-reach', leaving him with weaknesses and holes that may prove his undoing, i.e. 29...♖b5 30 ♖d2 ♖ad8 31 a4 ♖a5 32 e4 ♘e7 33 cxd6 ♖xd6 34 e5 ♖d5 and White must be very careful to avoid a disaster. However action on the other side of the board with 29 g4!? hxg4 30 fxg4 ♘h6 31 h3 leads to a position that is difficult to judge—on the one hand, White has created weaknesses around his king and 'spoilt' his pawn structure while, on the other, Black's knight is poorly placed.

29...h4!



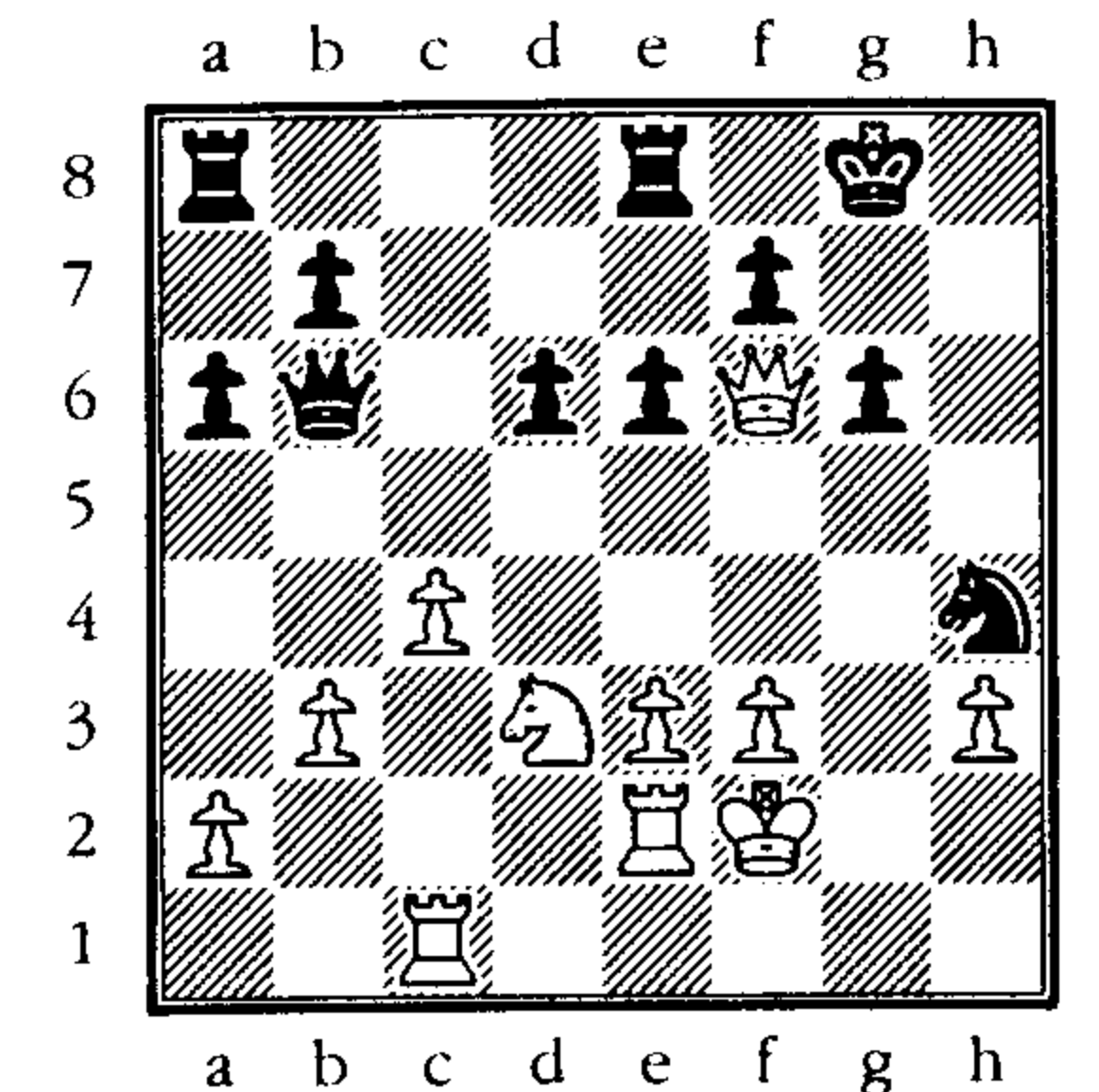
30 gxh4?

A mistake. Better was 30 g4! ♘g3 31 ♖d2 e5?! 32 c5! dxc5 33 ♘xc5 ♖ad8 (33...e4?? 34 ♘d7 wins) 34 ♘d7 ♖e6 35 ♖cd1 and White has the upper hand.

30...♘xh4

Black misses his big chance. 30...♖d8!, 'sneaking' around the back, gives White a real headache.

31 ♖f6!

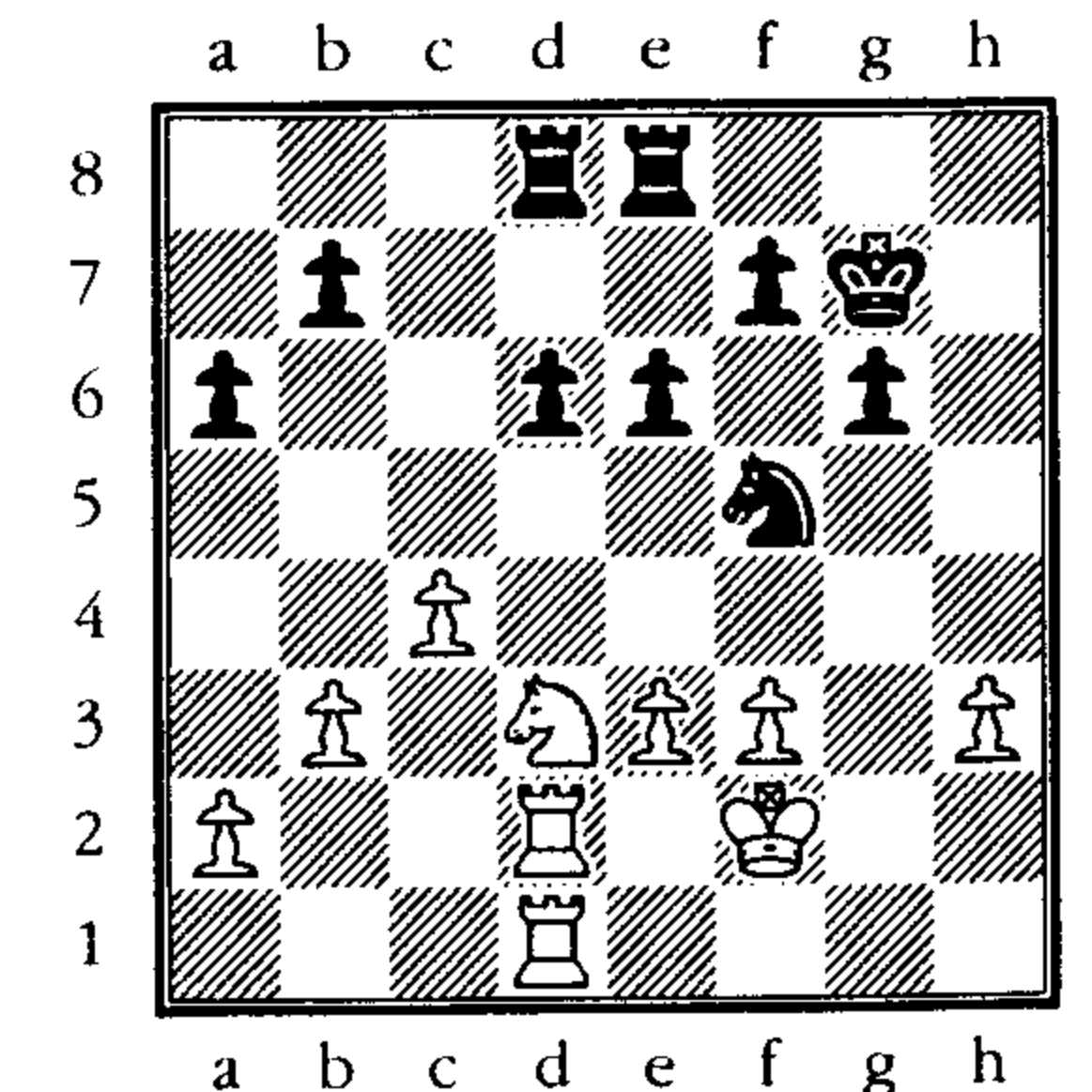


Bolting the door before the horse has bolted! Now that he controls the h4-d8 diagonal White has an edge, although 31 c5!? was also interesting.

31...♖d8 32 ♖xd8 ♖axd8 33 ♖d2 ♘f5

33...♙f8, followed by centralising the king further by ...♙f8-e7, is the best idea available in the position.

34 ♖cd1 ♙g7



35 ♘f4

White tries to build up slowly, but stronger was 35 $\text{d}c5!$ utilising the pin on the 'd'-file. Then 35... $\text{b}b8$ 36 $\text{d}d7!$ (36 $\text{d}e4$ $\text{h}h8!$) 36... $\text{b}bd8$ 37 $\text{d}b6$ $\text{h}h8$ 38 $e4$ $\text{d}e7$ 39 $\text{a}xd6$ $\text{a}xd6$ 40 $\text{a}xd6$ $\text{a}xh3$ 41 $\text{a}d7$ is very good for White.

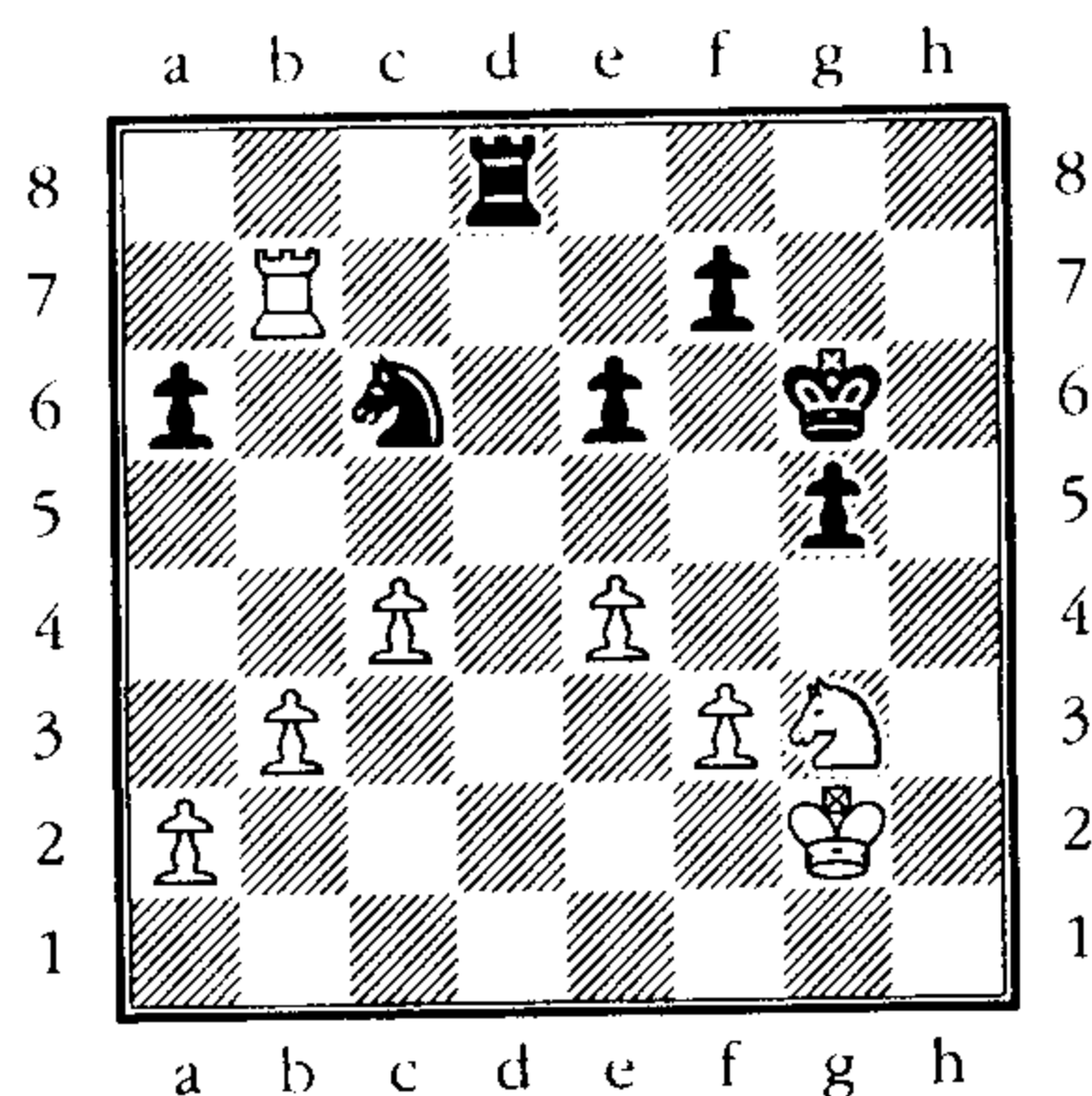
35... $g5$ 36 $\text{d}h5+$ $\text{g}g6$ 37 $\text{d}g3$ $\text{h}h8$ 38 $e4$ $\text{d}e7$ 39 $\text{a}xd6$ $\text{a}xd6$ 40 $\text{a}xd6$ $\text{a}xh3$ 41 $\text{a}d7$ $\text{d}c6$ 42 $\text{g}g2!$

Cutting down on any ideas Black has of getting counterplay through a penetration of the seventh rank by ... $\text{h}h3-h2+$.

42... $\text{h}h8$ 43 $\text{a}xb7$

White's queenside pawn majority now looks as if it will prove decisive but care must still be taken to stop any counterplay by Black.

43... $\text{a}d8$



44 $\text{d}f1!$

Stopping any nonsense, whereas 44 $\text{b}b6?!$ would give Black some hope after 44... $\text{a}d2+$ 45 $\text{g}h3$ $\text{d}d4$ 46 $\text{a}xa6$ $\text{d}xf3$. Then 47 $\text{d}f5$ is not as strong as it first seems because Black can then play 47... $\text{g}h5!$, generating more than just 'optical' threats, e.g. 48 $\text{d}d6$ $\text{d}h2!$ 49 $\text{a}a8$ $\text{d}f1$ 50 $\text{h}h8+$ $\text{g}g6$ and White must

take the draw with 51 $\text{a}g8+$ $\text{g}h5$ 52 $\text{h}h8+$.

44... $\text{a}d3$ 45 $\text{b}b6$

Now the time is right.

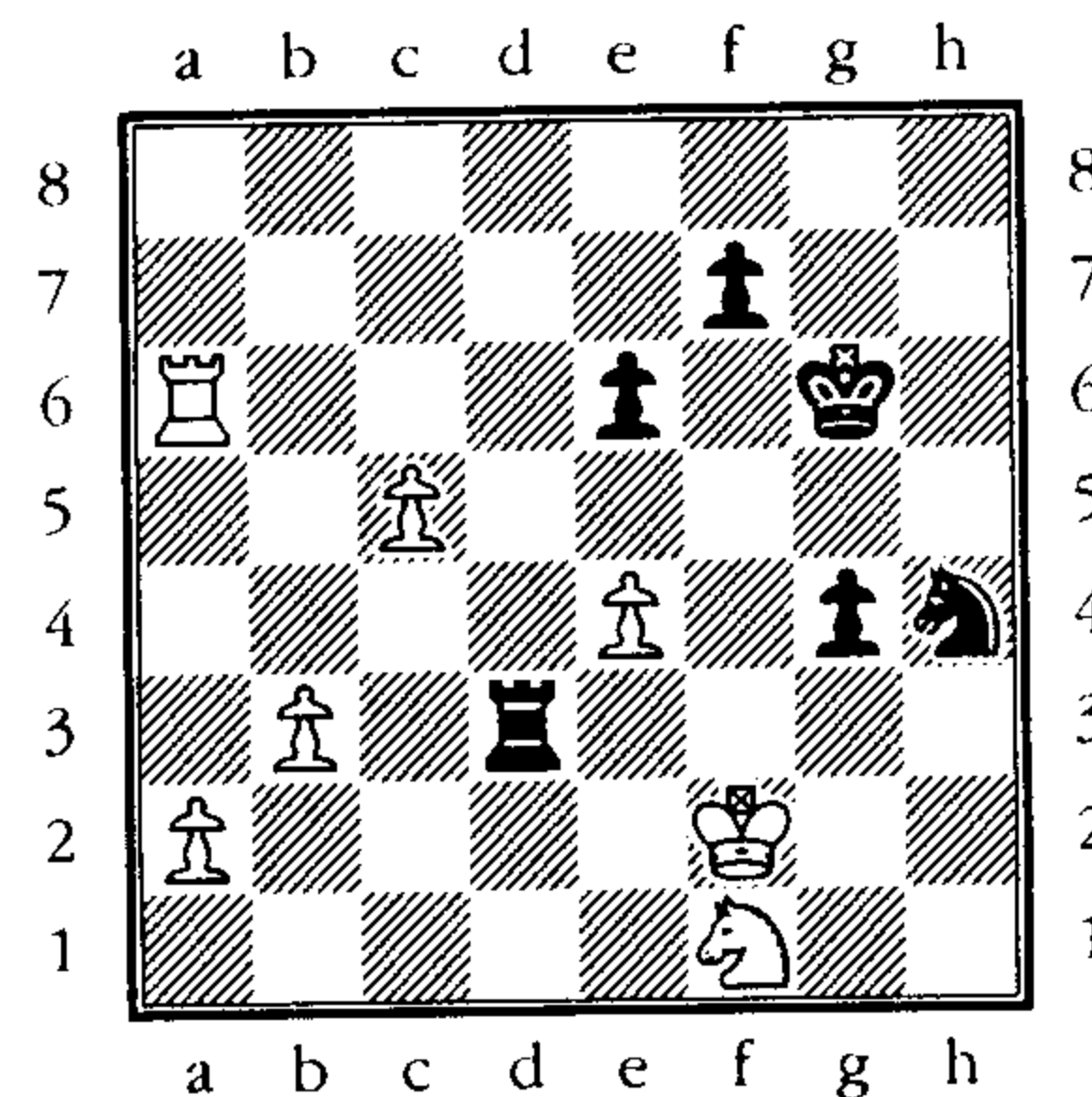
45... $\text{d}e5$ 46 $\text{a}xa6$ $\text{d}xf3$ 47 $c5$ $\text{d}h4+!?$

Black's best chance lay in activating his king, e.g. 47... $\text{g}f6$ 48 $b4$ $\text{g}e5$ 49 $b5$ $\text{c}c3$ 50 $c6$ $\text{g}f4!$ and White has problems with his king safety, while it will take time to convert one of his queenside pawns.

48 $\text{g}f2$

Now White's king is safe but Black's 'g'-pawn can still give him headaches.

48... $g4$



49 $c6$

49 $\text{g}e2$ looks strong but after 49... $\text{c}c3$ 50 $b4$ $g3$ 51 $\text{a}a8$ (51 $\text{d}xg3!?$ $\text{a}xg3$ 52 $c6$ may be a stronger option but is very committal) 51... $\text{c}c2+$ 52 $\text{d}d2$ $g2$ 53 $\text{a}g8+$ $\text{g}f6$ and it is Black who is better as White's pieces are tied up. Moreover, if he attempts to untangle himself by 54 $\text{g}d3$ $\text{a}xd2+$ 55 $\text{g}xd2$ then 55... $\text{d}g6!$ (55... $g1=\text{w}?$ 56 $\text{a}xg1$ $\text{d}f3+$ 57 $\text{g}e3$ $\text{d}xg1$ 58 $b5$

leaves Black with the problem of how to stop the pawns) and the black pawn queens.

49... $\text{a}f3+$

49... $g3+$ transposes to the game after 50 $\text{d}xg3$ $\text{a}f3+$ 51 $\text{g}e2$ $\text{a}xg3$ 52 $\text{a}a4$.

50 $\text{g}e2$ $g3$ 51 $\text{d}xg3$ $\text{a}xg3$ 52 $\text{a}a4!$

Both 52 $c7$ $\text{c}c3$ and 52 $\text{d}d2$ $\text{g}f6!$ 53 $c7$ $\text{a}g8$ leave Black well in the game.

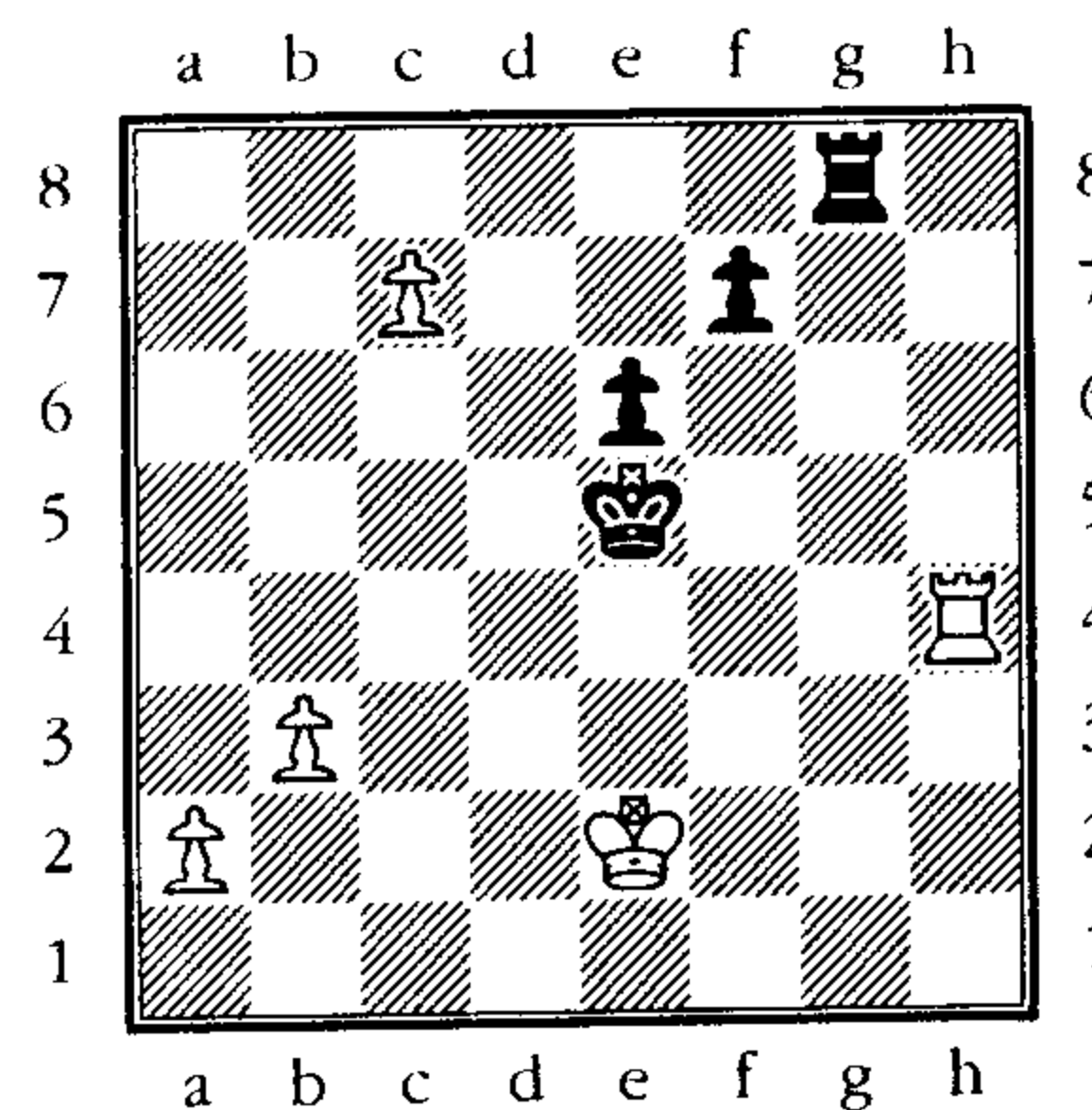
52... $\text{g}f6$

52... $\text{a}g2+$ 53 $\text{g}d3$ $\text{a}g3+$ 54 $\text{g}c4$ $\text{g}f6$ stops the tactic played in the game but at the cost of activating White's king.

53 $e5+$ $\text{g}xe5$ 54 $c7$ $\text{a}g8$

54... $\text{c}c3$ allows 55 $\text{c}c4!$ and the pawn will promote.

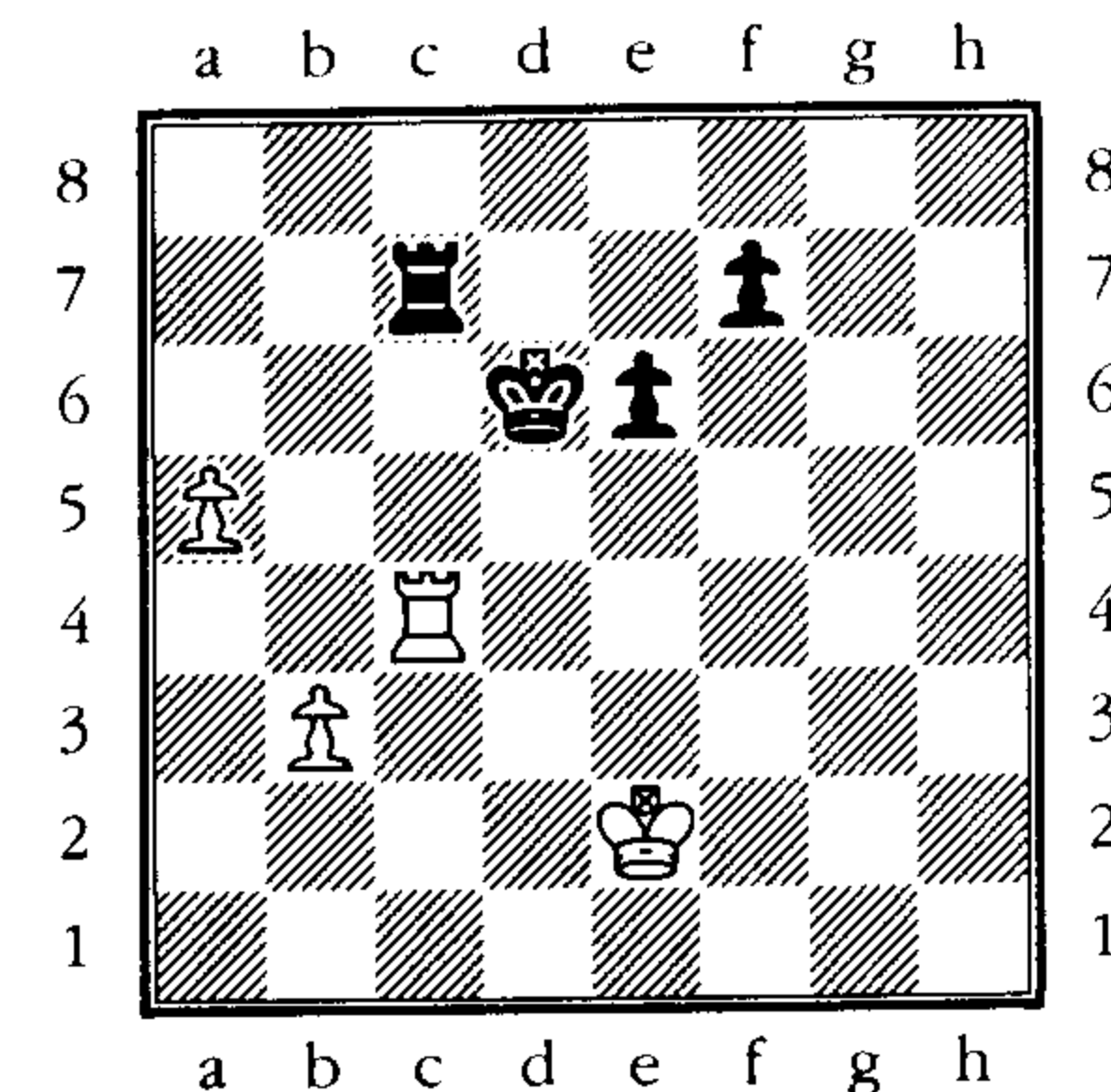
55 $\text{a}xh4$



55... $\text{c}c8$

Black misses a real chance of securing the half point by 55... $\text{g}d6!$ 56 $\text{h}h7$ $f5$ 57 $\text{g}f3$ $\text{c}c8$ 58 $\text{g}f4$ $\text{a}xc7$ 59 $\text{a}xc7$ $\text{g}xc7$ 60 $\text{g}e5$ $\text{g}b6$ with a drawn king and pawn ending.

56 $\text{c}c4$ $\text{g}d6$ 57 $a4$ $\text{a}xc7$ 58 $a5!?$

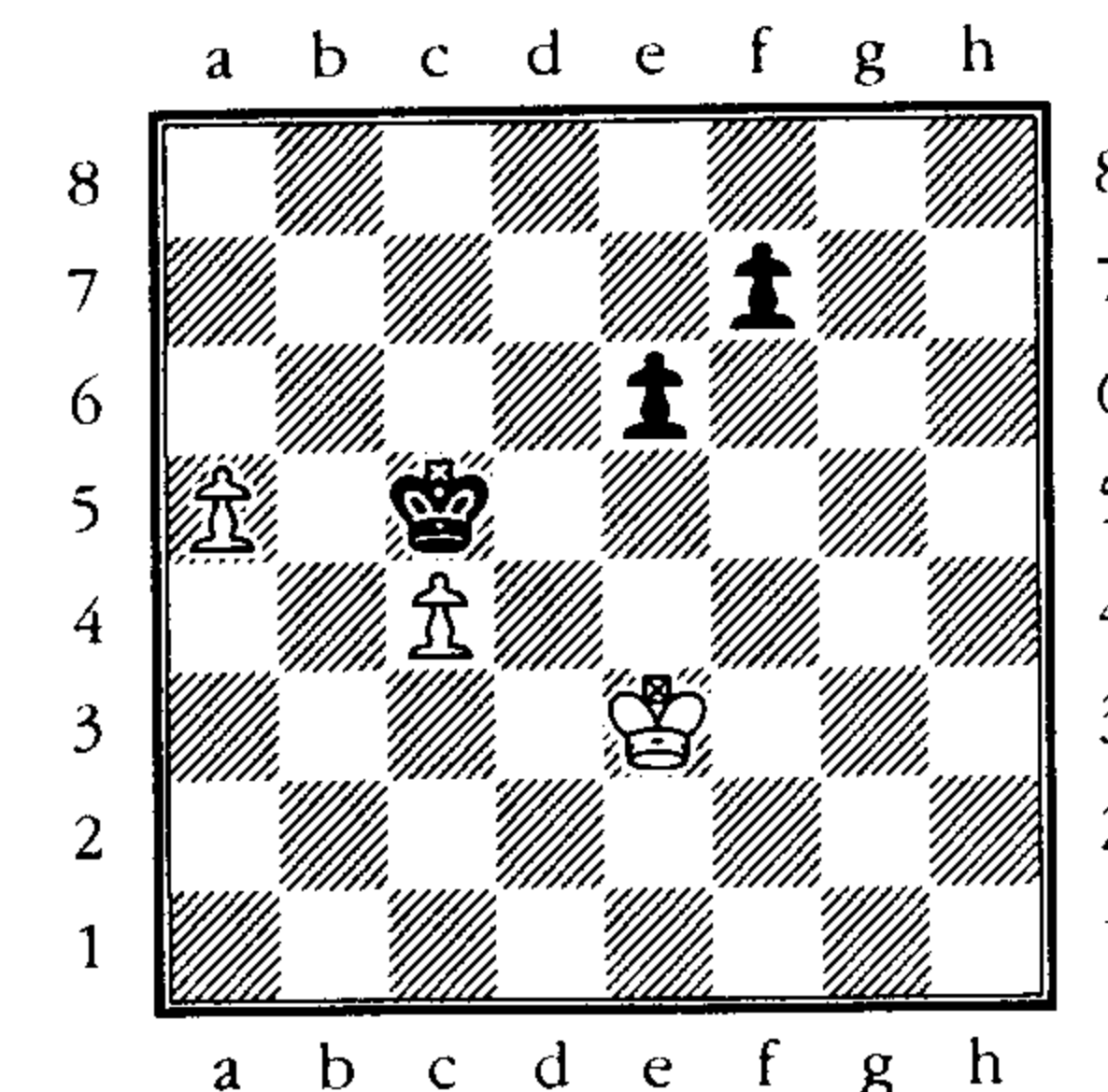


Leading to a complex king and pawn ending, which I guess White entered as he appreciated that it was his only real chance of playing for a win.

58... $\text{a}xc4$ 59 $bxc4$ $\text{g}c5$

59... $f5!$ 60 $a6$ $\text{g}c6$ 61 $c5$ $e5$ draws as White's only attempt to 'get at' the black pawns comes to nothing e.g. 62 $\text{g}f3$ $\text{g}c7$ 63 $\text{g}g3$ $\text{g}c6$ 64 $\text{g}h4$ $e4$ 65 $\text{g}g3$ $e3$ 66 $\text{g}f3$ $f4$.

60 $\text{g}e3$



60... $f5??$

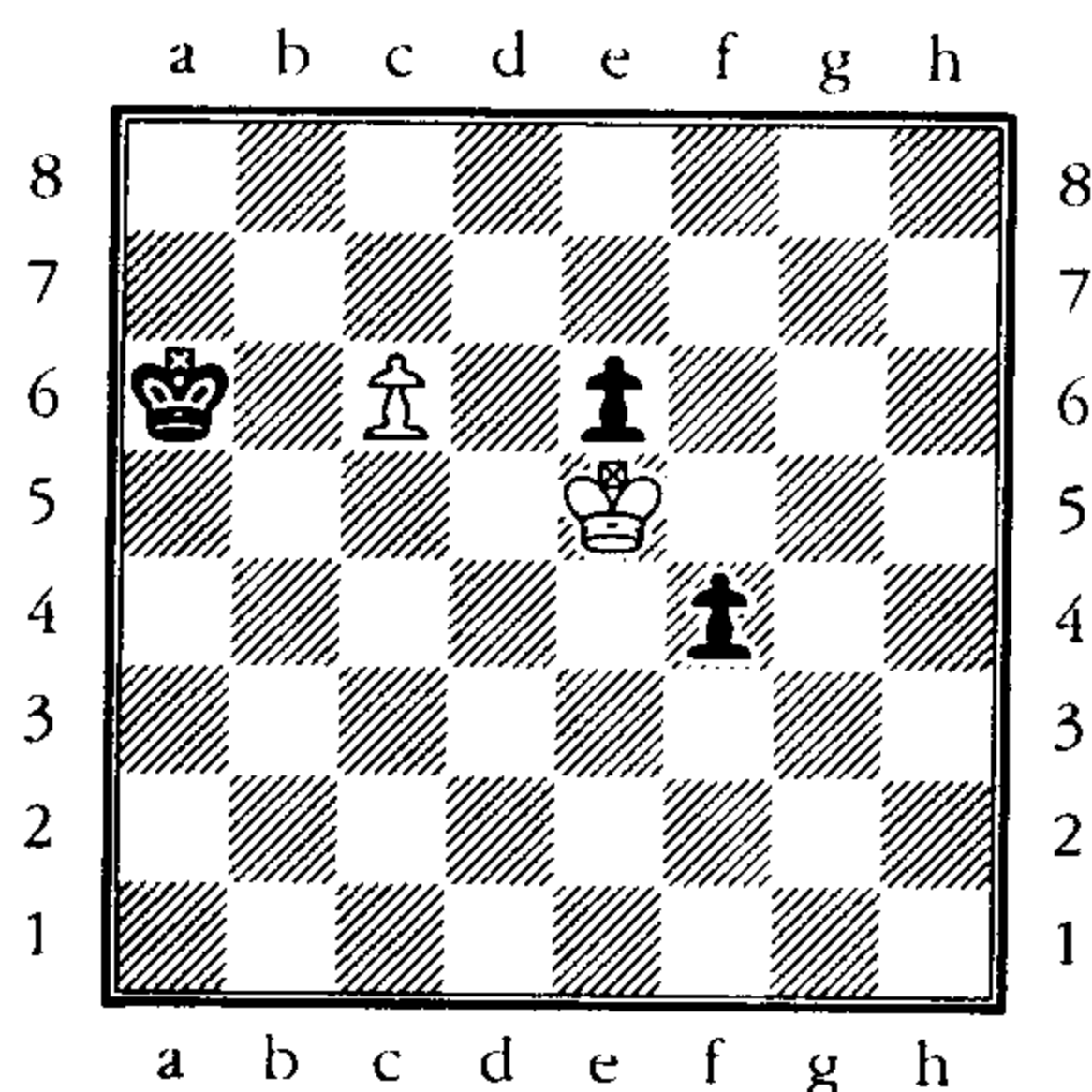
After 60... $f6$ 61 $\text{g}f4$ $\text{g}c6$ 62 $\text{g}g4$ $\text{g}c5$ Black has the same plan as in the last note and can still hold the game. The problem with the move

played is that it allows the white king to penetrate before dealing the death blow.

61 ♔f4 ♕c6 62 ♕e5 ♖c5 63 a6!
♗b6 64 c5+ ♕xa6 65 c6

Black should now be powerless to stop the pawn queening.

65...f4



66 ♕xe6??

66 ♕d6! gains a valuable tempo as White would queen with check, i.e. 66...f3 67 c7 ♗b7 68 ♕d7 f2 69 c8=♗+.

66...f3??

66...♗b6! would have saved the game after 67 ♕d6 f3 68 c7 f2 69 c8=♗ f1=♗. Even though he has the 'first move' White doesn't have enough to gain the full point.

67 c7

Now, once more, the pawn will queen with check.

67...♗b6 68 c8=♗ 1-0

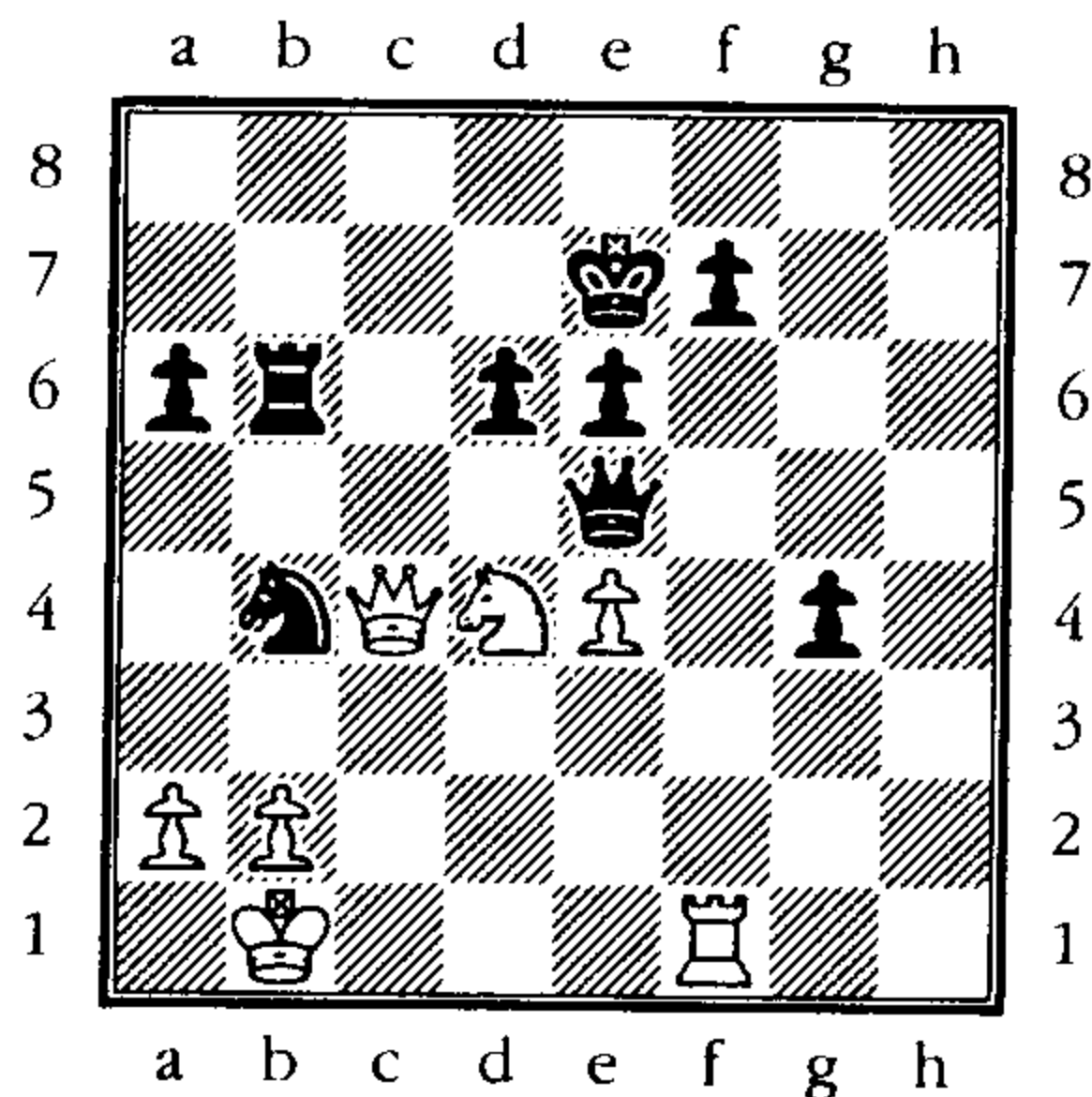
An epic that must have taken a great deal of mental energy from both players.

12) Missing your shot

In some kinds of position, where you have a clear positional edge, if you miss a strong plan but maintain control there is a good chance that you will get further opportunities. However, if you are on the defending side, you may get only one chance to equalise. In sharp double-edged positions too, you might only get 'one shot' and if you 'blow it' then you could easily lose. Getting the 'nose' to detect that there is 'something in the air' is a big asset for a player and here we will be looking both at positions where players missed their chance as well as others where they 'hit the nail on the head'.

Our first example is one where Black had been under attack for some time and had just started to break free from his chains only then to let White 'off the hook'.

White: Simon Buckley
Black: Duncan Grossett
Bristol League Open 1997



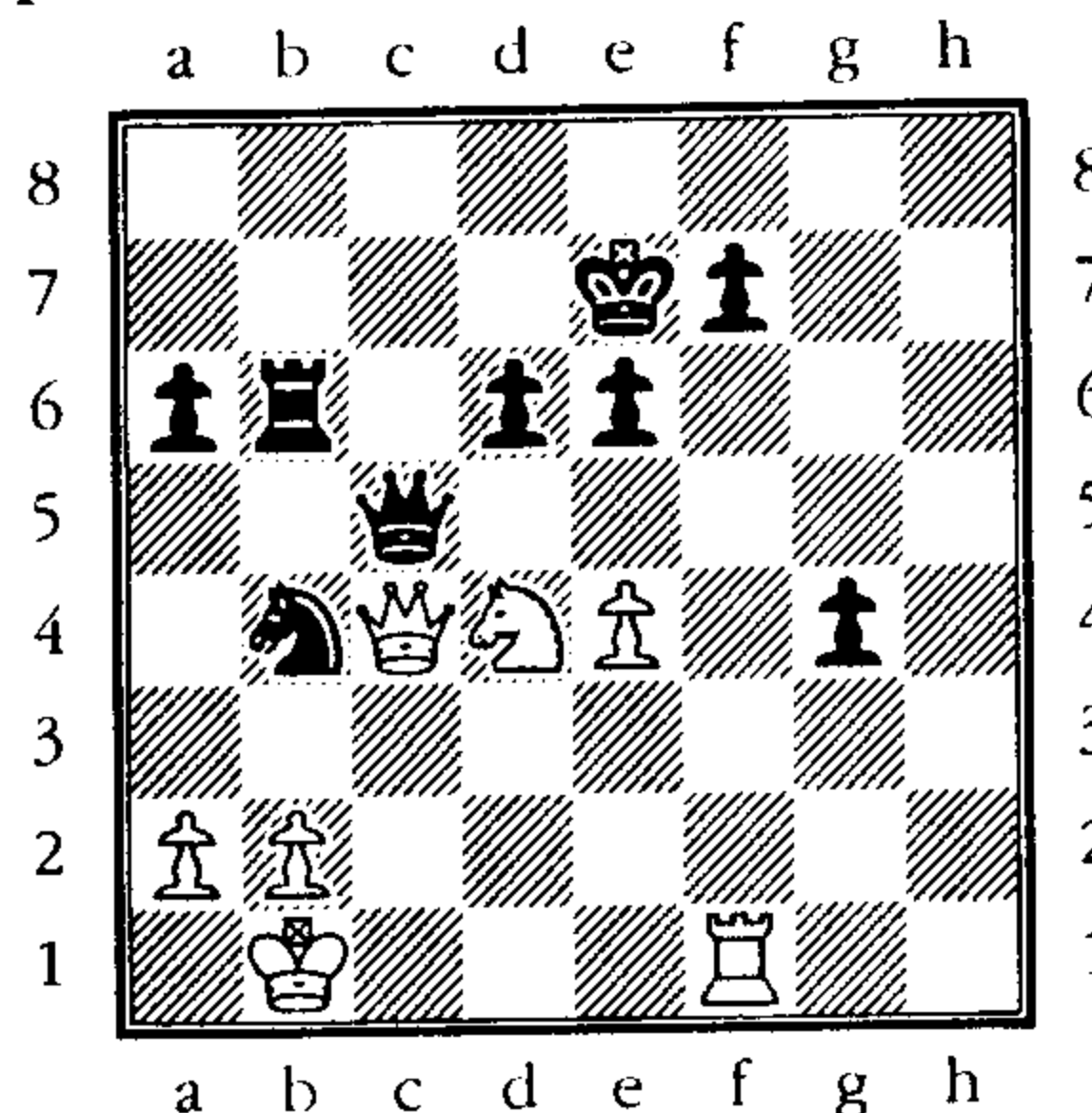
44...♗c5?

Critical is the 'natural' capture 44...♗xe4+ when after:

a) 45 ♖c1 ♗xa2+! 46 ♖d1 ♗b1+ 47 ♖d2 ♗xb2+ 48 ♖e3 (48 ♗c2 ♗xc2+ 49 ♗xc2 ♗xf1 wins) 48...♗e4+!! 49 ♖xe4 d5+ 50 ♗xd5 ♗c3+! and with 51...♗xd5 Black will win the endgame without much trouble.

b) 45 ♖a1 ♗b7 Now that the black queen is guarding e6, Black can afford to 'go solid' and protect c7 before playing ...♗e4-d5 to force an exchange queens thanks to the 'x'-ray threat of mate on a2. (Not however 45...♗d5?? 46 ♗c7+ ♖e8 47 ♗xf7+ ♖d8 48 ♗f8+ ♖c7 49 ♗f7 mate) 46 ♗c8 (46 ♗d1 ♗d5 exchanges queens) 46...♗d5 47 ♗b3 ♗b5 (47...♗xa2? 48 ♗a5 puts White back into the game although after 48...♗b4 49 ♗xb7+ ♗xb7 50 ♗xb7 f5 White still has problems stopping the black pawn mass) 48 ♗c1 ♗d5 (after 48...♗xa2 49 ♗c7+ ♗xc7 50 ♗xc7+ ♖f6 51 ♗d8+ White is going to get a few checks and Black must be careful) 49 ♗h8 ♗c7 50 ♗h4+ ♖d7 51 ♗xg4 ♗xc1+ 52 ♗xc1 and White's chances of survival are not good.

Now after 44...♗c5 White lands his 'sucker punch' to secure the half point.



45 ♗xf7+! ♖xf7 46 ♗xe6+ ♖f8

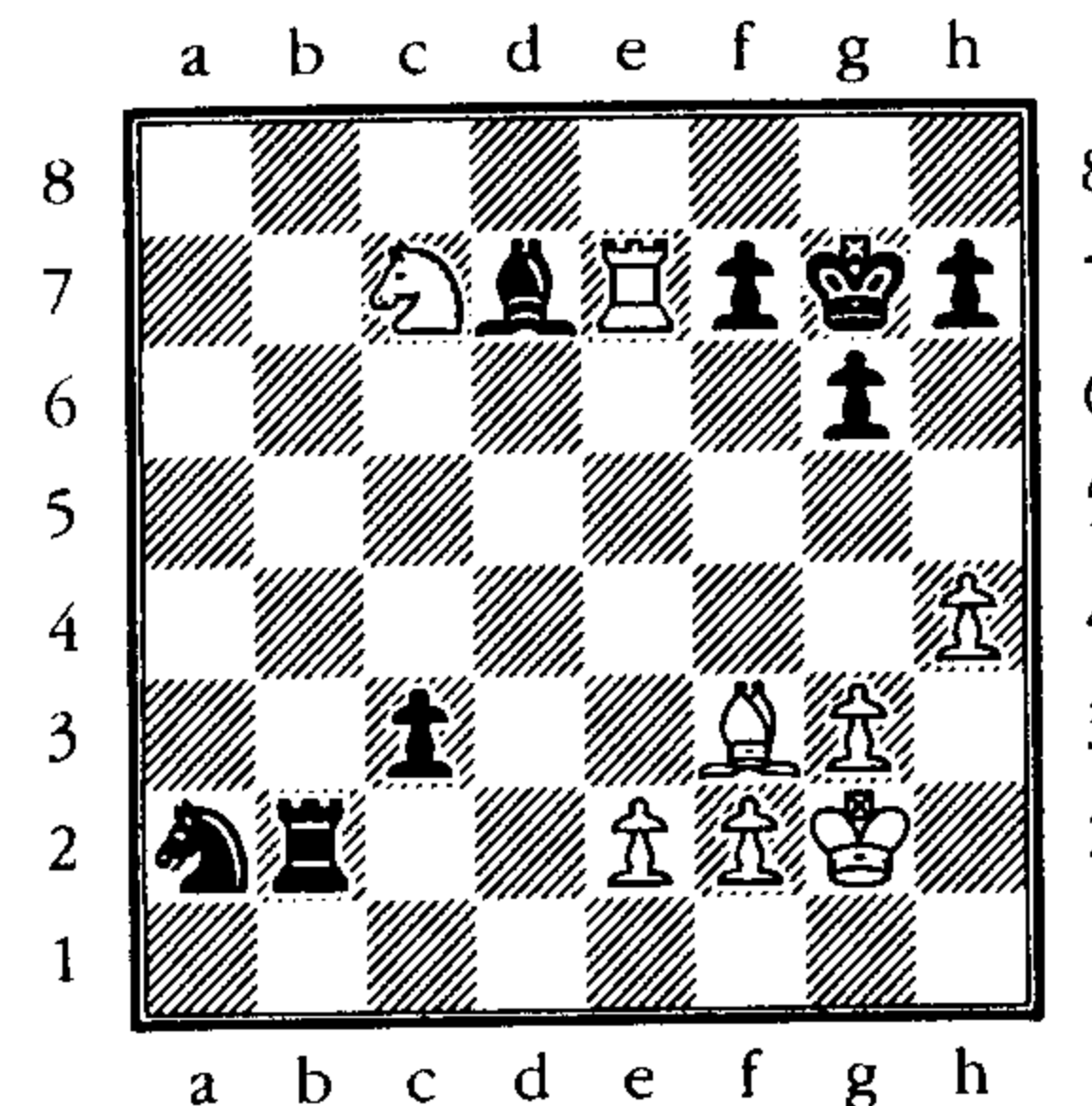
If 46...♖g7?? Black would give up the other half point after 47 ♗f5+.

47 ♗f6+ ♖e8 48 ♗g6+ ♖d7 49 ♗xg4+ 1/2-1/2

Black is lucky not to be losing.

Our second case is one of my own failures but I believe I had some justification (well you have to justify these things don't you!) in that I needed to win the tournament. Therefore, in a position where it was likely that most of the pieces were likely to be exchanged and the game would have ended in a draw, I found a way to generate massive complications and get an opportunity for my 'one shot'. However the effort I had made to create the chance in the first place had left me short of time and in the critical position I chose a different move which fell short of the mark due to a resource that my opponent had at his disposal.

White: Chris Baker
Black: Chris Beaumont
Bristol League Open 1997



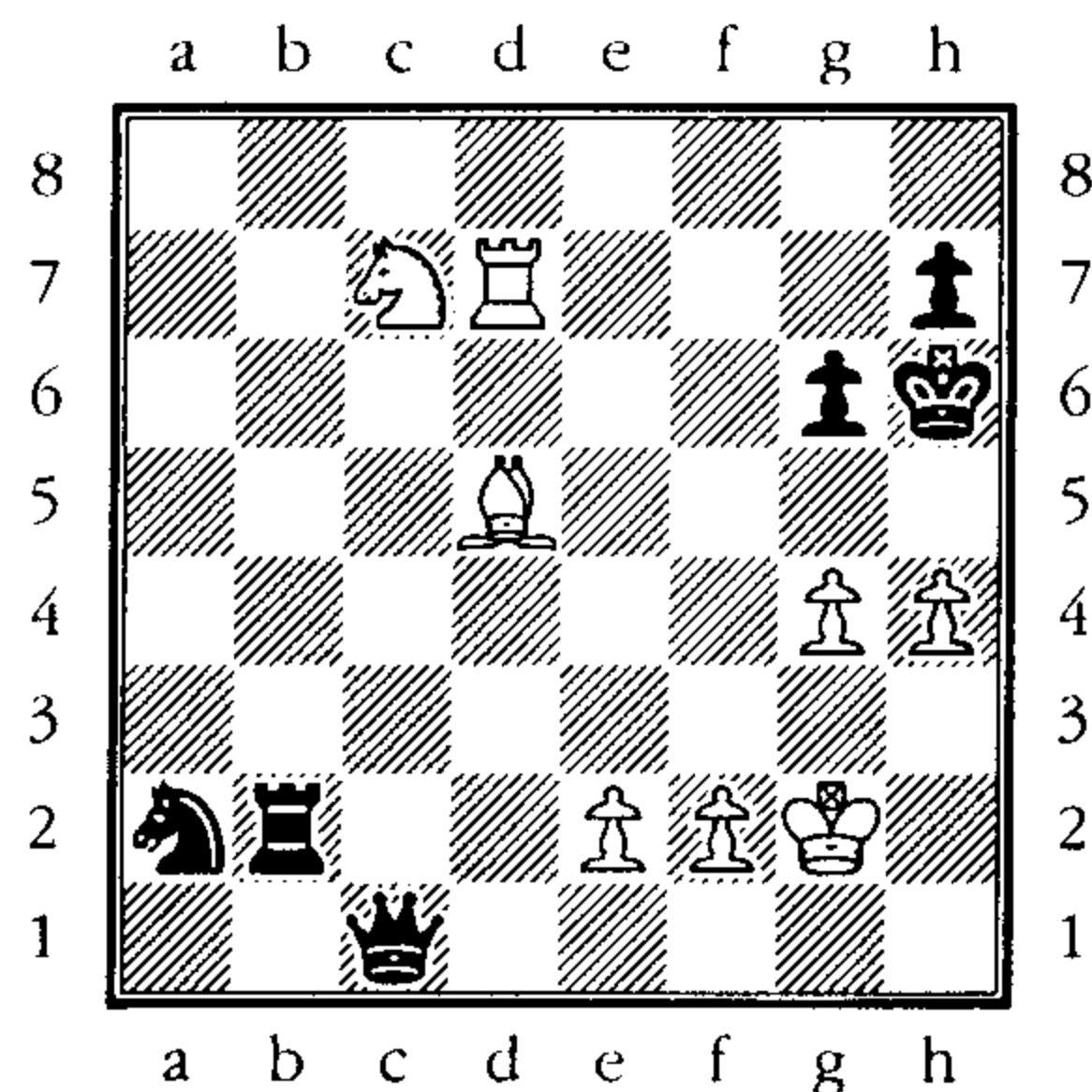
35 ♖d5!!

The !! is as much for audacity as anything else. After 35 ♖xd7!? c2 36 ♘e8+ ♕f8 37 ♘f6 ♘c3! (37...c1=♚?? 38 ♖d5 wins) 38 ♖c7 c1=♚ 39 ♖d5 ♘xd5 40 ♘xh7+ ♕g7 41 ♖xc1 ♕xh7 42 ♕f3 Black should win but there are still technical difficulties due to the reduced material.

35...c2 36 ♖xf7+ ♕h6

After 36...♕h8 37 ♖xd7 (objectively better is for White to go for the draw by 37 ♖f8+ ♕g7 38 ♖f7+ etc., although then, if he fancied chancing his arm, Black could always try playing 38...♕h6 transposing to the game) 37...c1=♚ 38 ♘e6 ♚c8 (38...h5 39 ♘g5) 39 ♖d8+ ♚xd8 40 ♘xd8 ♖xe2 41 ♘e6 and Black has his work cut out to secure the full point.

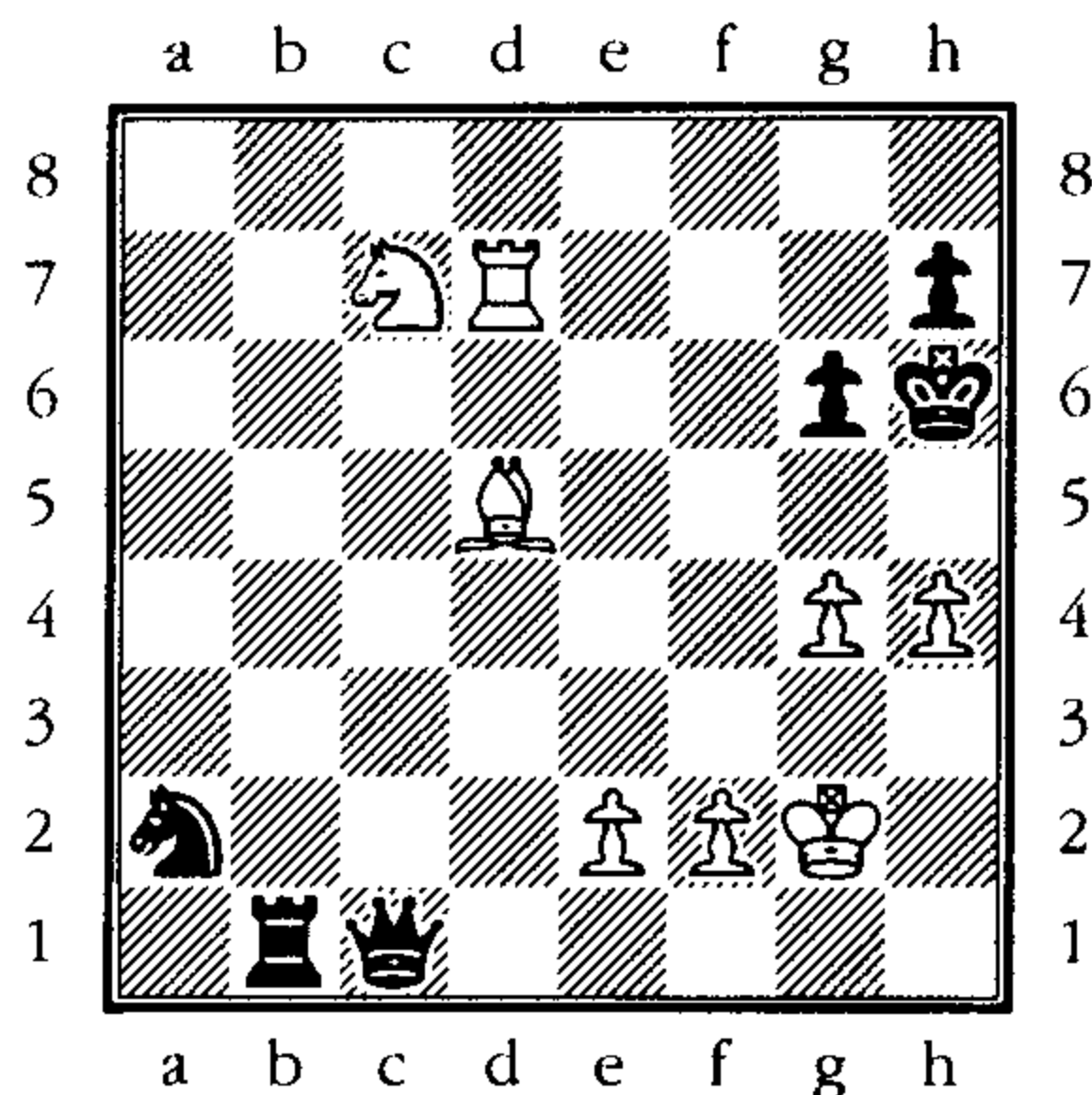
37 ♖xd7 c1=♚ 38 g4



38...♖b1

A better option was 38...♖d2! 39 g5+ ♕h5 40 ♖xh7+ ♕g4 41 ♖f3+ ♕f5 42 ♖e7! ♚a3! 43 e4+ ♕f4 44 ♘e6+ ♕e5 45 ♘f8+! ♕d4 (45...♚xe7?! 46 ♘xg6+ ♕d6 47 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 48 h5 ♕f7 49 ♕g3 ♘c3 50 ♖g2! and, though the position remains unclear, White has

good practical chances, e.g. 50...♖e2 51 f3 ♖e1 52 ♖h3 ♖h1 53 ♕g2 ♖d1 54 ♖f5 and, because the black rook and knight are failing to combine well, White should win) 46 ♖d7+ ♕c3 47 ♖xd2 ♕xd2 48 ♘xg6. Don't ask me what's happening: normally the queen should win but the black knight is out of play and White doesn't seem to have any immediate or obvious weaknesses and those pawns aren't far away from 'hitting the target'.



39 g5+

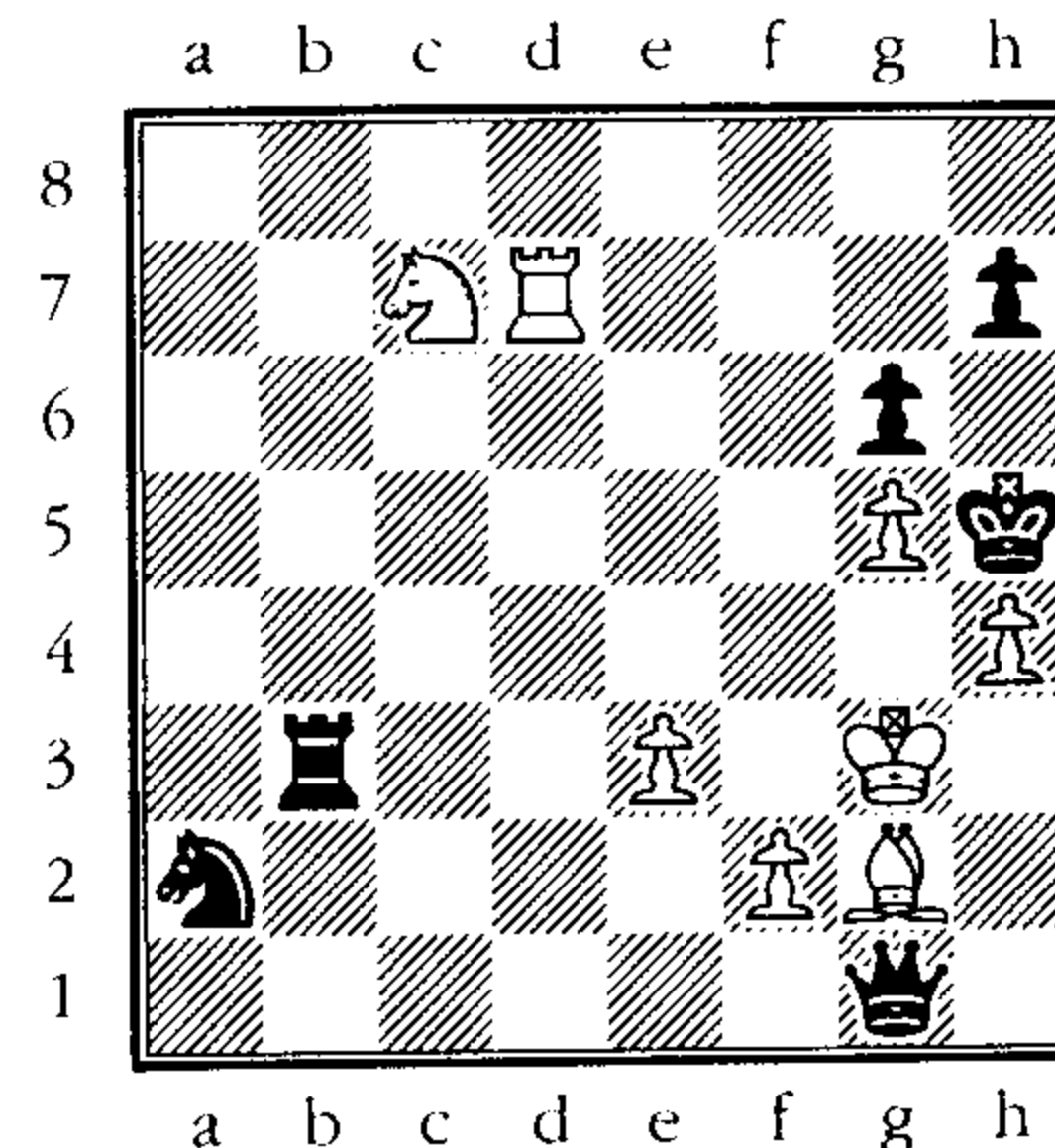
This is where I missed my chance with 39 ♕h3!! when, despite the king being out in the open on the third rank, Black has severe problems. Nevertheless, with a cunning counter sacrifice, he can just manage to hold on, i.e.

a) 39...g5 40 ♘e6! ♚c3+ (40...gxf4? 41 g5+ ♕h5 42 ♖f3+ ♕g6 43 ♖e4+ ♕h5 44 ♖xh7 mate) 41 e3 ♖b4 42 hxg5+ ♕g6 43 ♕h4! and Black is running out of suitable defences to the threats.

b) 39...♖b3+!! 40 ♖xb3 ♚h1+ 41 ♕g3 ♚g1+ 42 ♕f3 ♚h1+ 43 ♕g3 and White must allow the perpetual

as 43 ♕e3 ♚c1+ 44 ♕f3 ♚c6+ 45 ♖d5 ♘c3 wins for Black.

39...♕h5 40 ♕g3 ♚g1+ 41 ♖g2 ♖b3+ 42 e3



42...♖xe3+!

This was the resource I had missed when playing 39 g5+. Now Black starts to turn the position in his favour.

43 fxe3 ♚e1+

43...♚xe3+?? 44 ♖f3+ was my one last chance.

44 ♕f3 ♕xh4 45 ♖xh7+ ♕xg5 46 ♘e6+ ♕f6 47 ♘f4 ♘c3 48 ♖h1 ♚d2 49 ♖a1 g5 50 ♖a6+ ♕e7 51 ♘g6+ ♕d8 52 ♖f1?

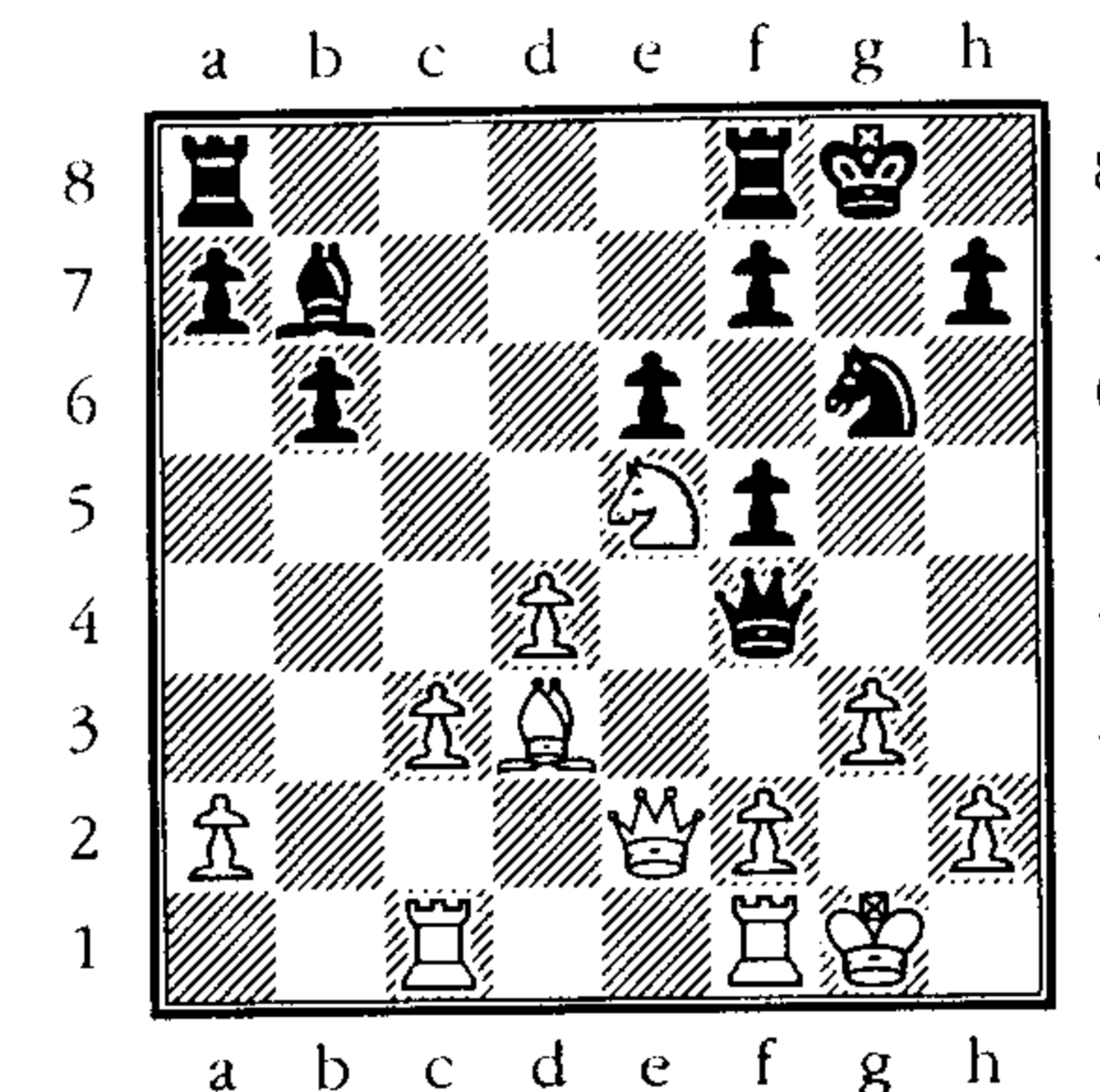
In the blitz finish White carries on through inertia.

52...♘d1 53 ♕g4 ♘xe3+ 54 ♕xg5 ♘xf1+ 55 ♕f6 ♚d4+ 56 ♕f7 ♚c4+ 57 ♖e6 ♘g3 58 ♘e5 ♚f4+ 59 ♕g8 ♘f5 60 ♘f7+ ♕d7 0-1

Time to call it a day and lick my wounds!

Here is a game of mine (from the previous round!) where I got it right!

White: Roy Phillips
Black: Chris Baker
Bristol League Open 1997



19...♘xe5!!

After 19...♚h6 20 f4 ♖fd8 21 ♖c4 ♘xe5 22 fxe5 ♖ac8 23 ♖f4 the position remains balanced. The move played doesn't win material but leaves Black with a strong positional edge.

20 gxf4 ♘f3+ 21 ♚xf3

21 ♕h1? ♘xd4+, followed by ...♘d4xe2, leaves Black a good pawn ahead.

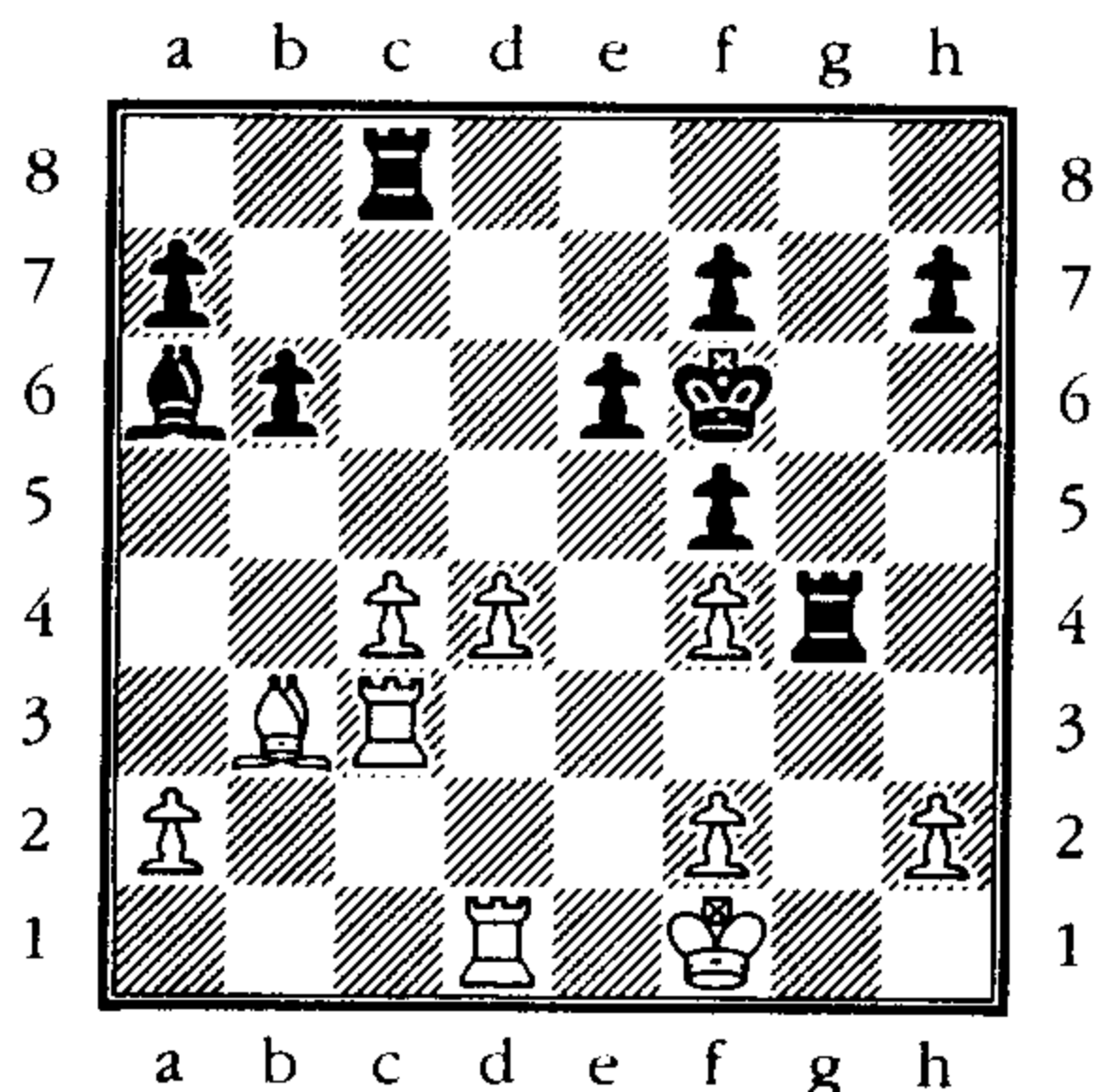
21...♖xf3

Now Black has the upper hand due to his better bishop and superior structure.

22 ♖fe1 ♖fd8

Even stronger was 22...♕h8! when after 23 ♖e3 ♖g8+ 24 ♕f1 ♖d5 the position is good for Black, e.g. 25 c4?! ♖ac8 26 ♕e2 ♖c6 27 ♕d2 (27 c5?! bxc5 28 dxc5 ♖gc8 is strong for Black) 27...♖gc8 28 cxd5!? ♖xc1 29 dxe6 fxe6 30 ♖xe6 ♖a1 31 ♖xf5 ♖xa2+ 32 ♕d3 and, with careful play, Black should convert for the full point.

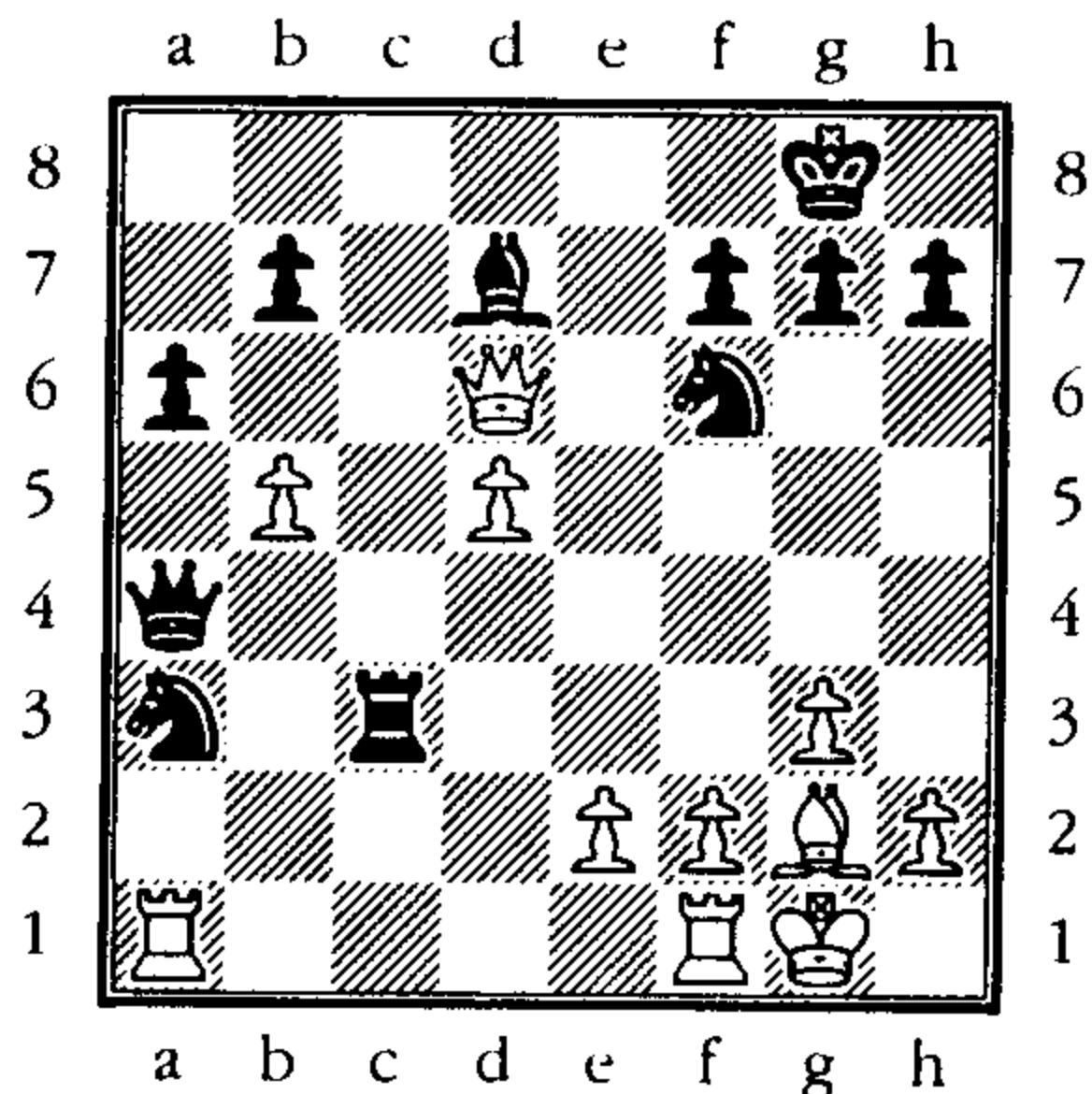
23 ♖e3 ♗b7 24 ♖g3+ ♔f8 25 ♖d1 ♖ac8 26 ♗c2 ♕e7 27 ♗b3 ♕f6 28 c4 ♗a6! 29 ♖c3 ♖g8+ 30 ♕f1 ♖g4



Effectively putting an end to any resistance.

31 f3 ♖xf4 32 ♕f2 ♖h4 33 ♕g3 ♖h5 34 ♖c2 ♗b7 35 d5 exd5 36 cxd5 ♖xc2 37 ♗xc2 ♗xd5 38 ♖d2 ♗e6 39 ♗b3 ♖g5+ 40 ♕f4 ♖g1 41 ♖f2 ♖b1 42 ♗c2 ♖b2 43 ♖e2 ♖xa2 0-1

White: Chris Beaumont
Black: David Buckley
Hanham Open 1997



David Buckley has always been very talented, one of his strengths being the ability to pick just the right moment to commit himself to a plan. His judgement in this position was spot on whilst that of his stronger opponent deserted him at just the wrong time.

24 ♖fc1?

With 24 bxa6 bxa6 25 ♖fd1 ♖b3 26 e4 ♗g4 27 ♖dc1 ♗e8 28 ♖d8 ♖d7 29 ♖a8! White is still well in the game—he has rook and pawn for the two knights and can at some stage cause a nuisance by playing e4-e5. Meanwhile Black's pawn on a6 is a weakling and he must keep an eye on his back rank.

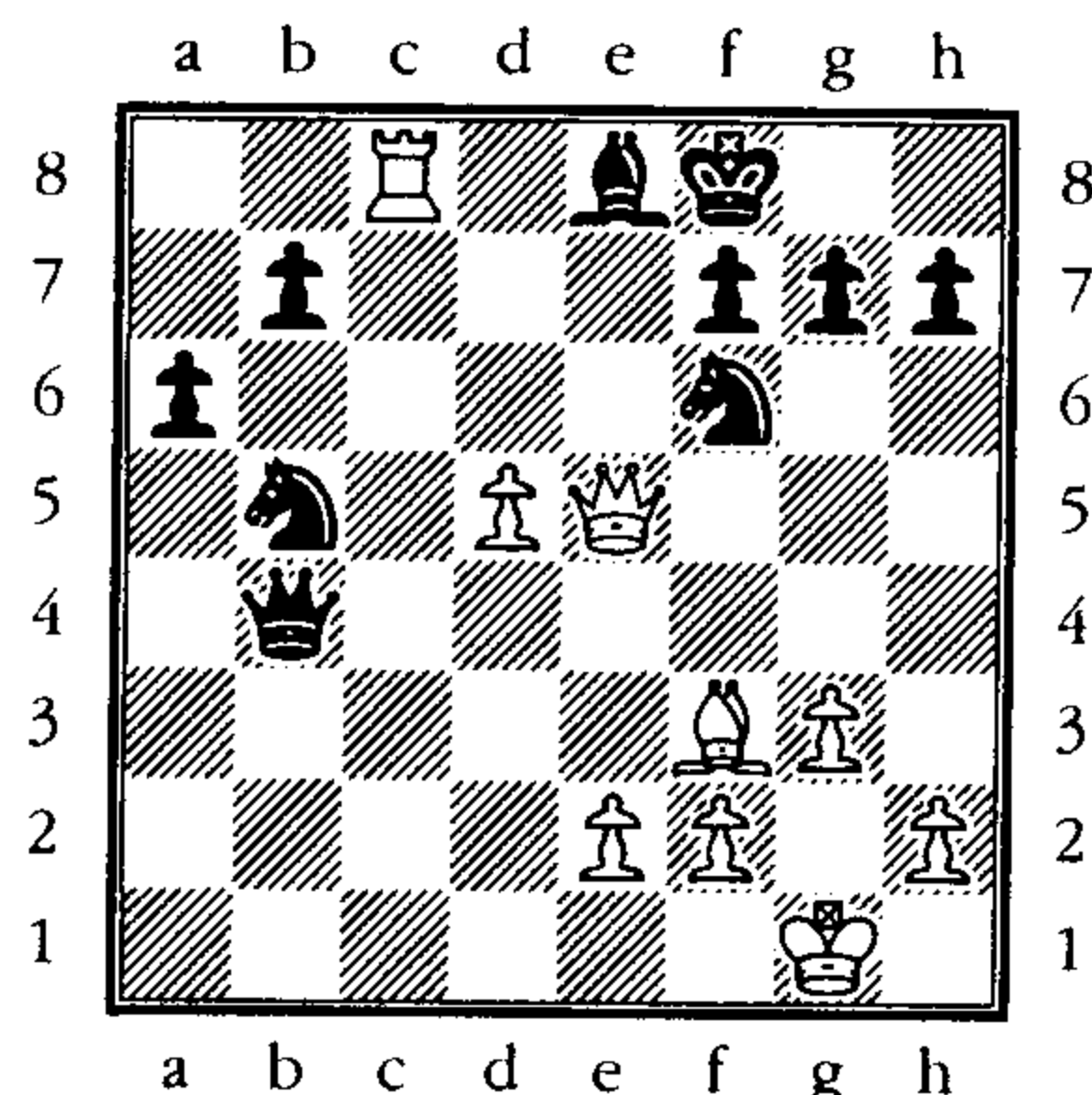
24...♖xc1+

Black doesn't give his opponent a second chance. With the exchange of rooks he unpins his knight and grabs another pawn, correctly assessing that White's play on the 8th rank is, in itself, not enough to hold the balance.

25 ♖xc1 ♗xb5 26 ♖c8+ ♗e8 27 ♖e5 ♕f8

27...♗d4!?

28 ♗f3 ♖b4!



Covering the dark squares and retaining the option of retreating along the a3-f8 diagonal in order to exchange queens which would greatly reduce any ideas White might have of generating active counterplay.

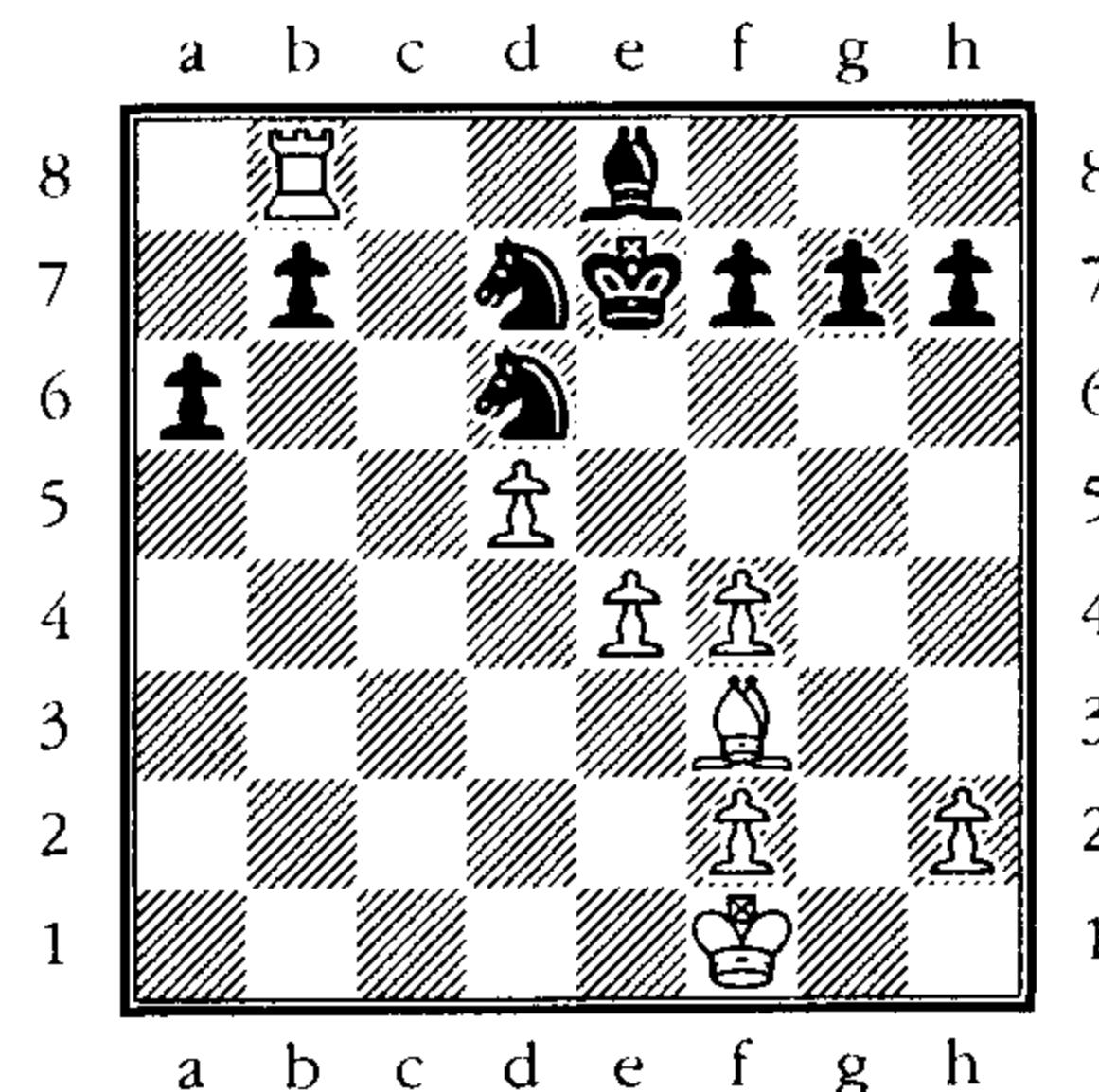
29 ♖b8 ♖d6 30 ♖f4

30 ♖xd6+ ♗xd6 31 ♕f1 is no better.

30...♖xf4 31 gxf4 ♗d6

Not only blockading White's passed 'd'-pawn but also stopping any ideas White may have had of playing e2-e4.

32 ♕f1 ♕e7 33 e4



33...♗d7

Black has plans of trapping White's rook. Also very strong was 33...♗fxe4 34 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 35 ♖xb7+ ♕d6 as 36 ♖b6+ ♕xd5 37 ♖xa6 allows 37...♗b5+ followed by ...♗b5xa6.

34 ♖a8 ♗b6 35 ♖b8 ♕d7 36 e5 ♕c7! 37 ♖xe8 ♗xe8 38 d6+ ♕c8 39 ♗g4+ ♗d7

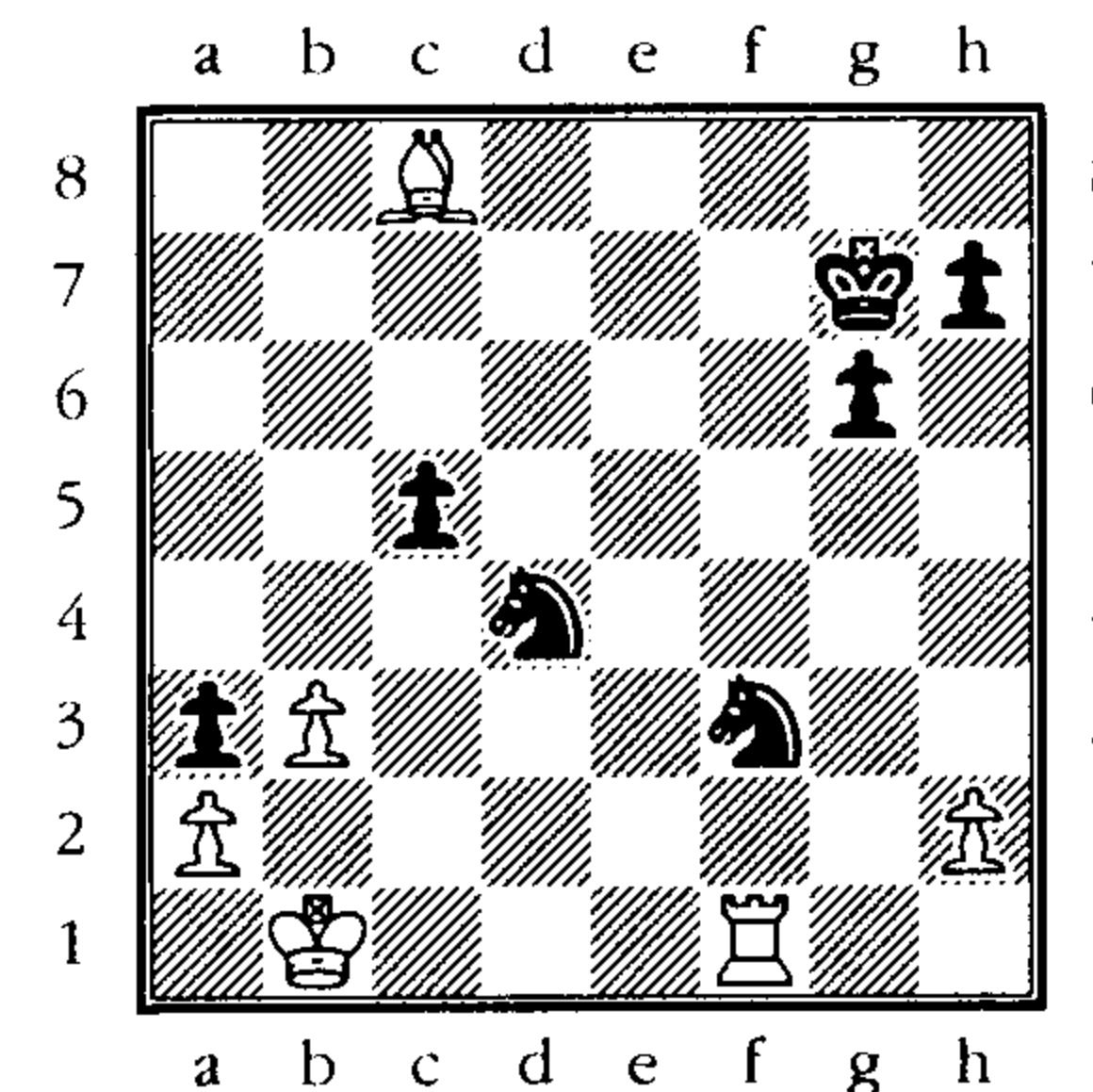
With the pawns well blockaded Black can start to get his own pawns on the queenside rolling.

40 f5? ♗xe5 0-1

White resigns as 41 f6+ ♗xg4 gets nowhere.

And here, from the same tournament, is David's sister beating a strong player after he gets too casual and leaves her 'a shot'.

White: Paul Helbig
Black: Melanie Buckley
Hanham Open 1997



A few moves previously White had correctly refused a draw and now should have the opportunity to press for the win.

43 ♖c1?

With 43 ♖f2 White retains the advantage as the black knights cannot hold their aggressive posts on d4 and e5 for long and eventually White's material advantage should tell.

43...♗d2+ 44 ♕a1 ♗4xb3+ 45 axb3 ♗xb3+ 46 ♕b1 a2+!

It is this sting in the tail that wins the game.

47 ♕xa2 ♗xc1+ 48 ♕b2 ♗d3+ 49 ♕c3 ♗e5!

This move leaves White unable to get at the pawn on c5, thereby leaving him little prospect of holding the game. The rest is just a 'mopping up' process.

50 ♖b7 ♔f6 51 ♔d2 ♔f5 52 ♔e2 ♔f4 53 ♖d5 g5 54 h3 ♔g3 55 ♖e6 ♗f3 56 ♔f1 h5 57 ♖f7 h4 58 ♖e6

♗e5 59 ♔e2 ♗g6 60 ♔f1 ♗f4 61 ♖c4 ♗xh3 62 ♖b5 0-1

The moral of the story is that you might only get one 'bite at the cherry' and so you must remain vigilant at all times and look for your moment of glory!

Part Three: Endgames

Introduction

In my opinion, the ending is the one part of the game that really 'sorts out the men from the boys'. Having had to 'fight' their way through the opening and middlegame, in the ending many people just go through the motions. Part of the reason for this is that with reduced material on the board players seem to feel that the play has become trivialised and that the outcome to the game should be 'obvious'. With this sort of attitude they are setting themselves up for a fall. If we accept the viewpoint that the ending is the one part of the game that to a large extent we can play with precision and near perfection, we are only fooling ourselves. For example, when is the last time you have mated with king and rook against king in the optimum number of moves? (unless your opponent defended badly of course!)

If you haven't seen this position before I would be very impressed if you could solve the problem and yet it only involves king and pawn vs. king and rook!

Solution:

1 ♔b5

Black will draw after 1 ♔b7 by playing 1...♖d7 and then exchanging off the rook for the pawn. Even worse is 1 ♔a5 when 1...♖c6 will win the pawn and the game!

1...♖d5+ 2 ♔b4

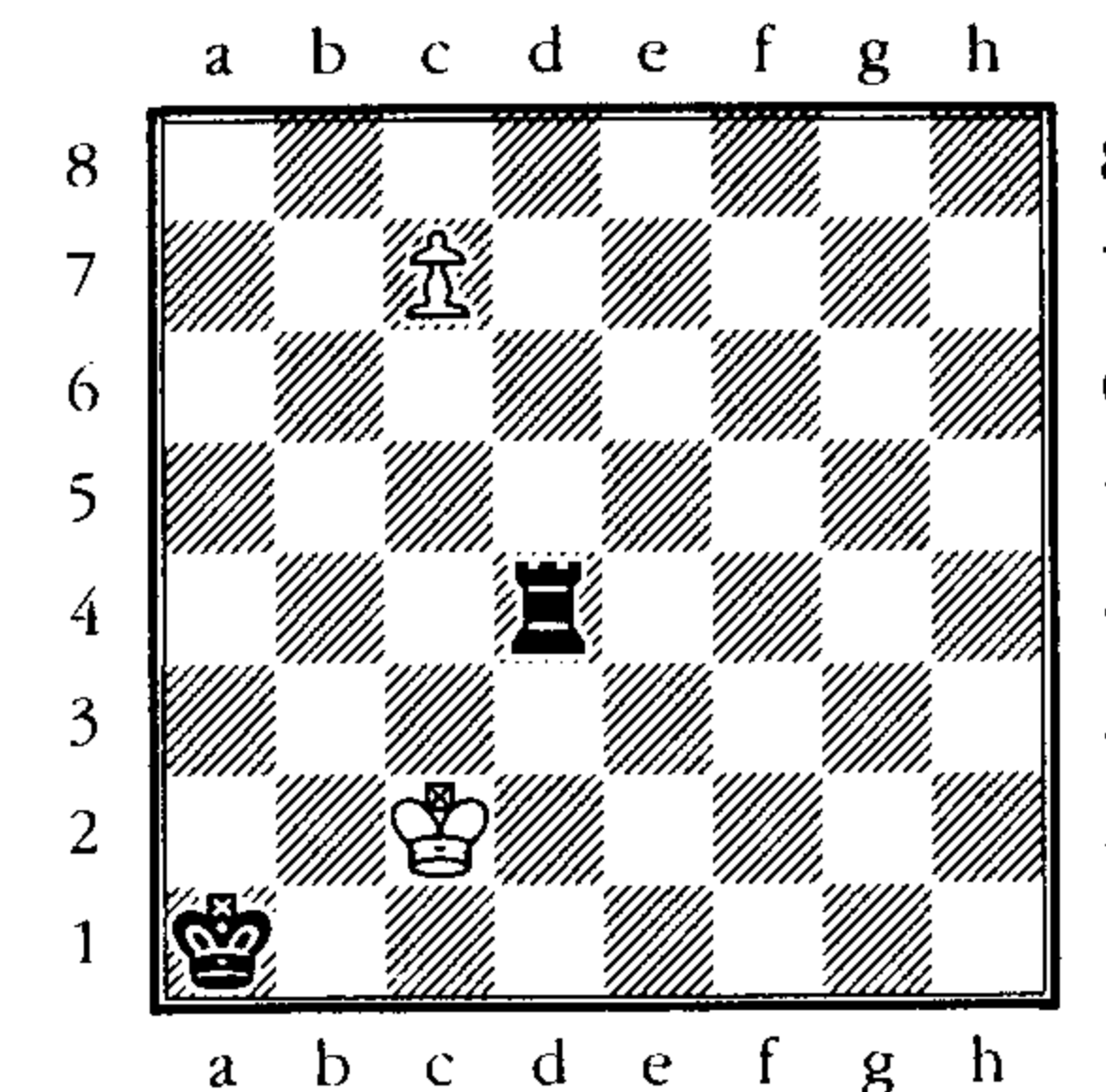
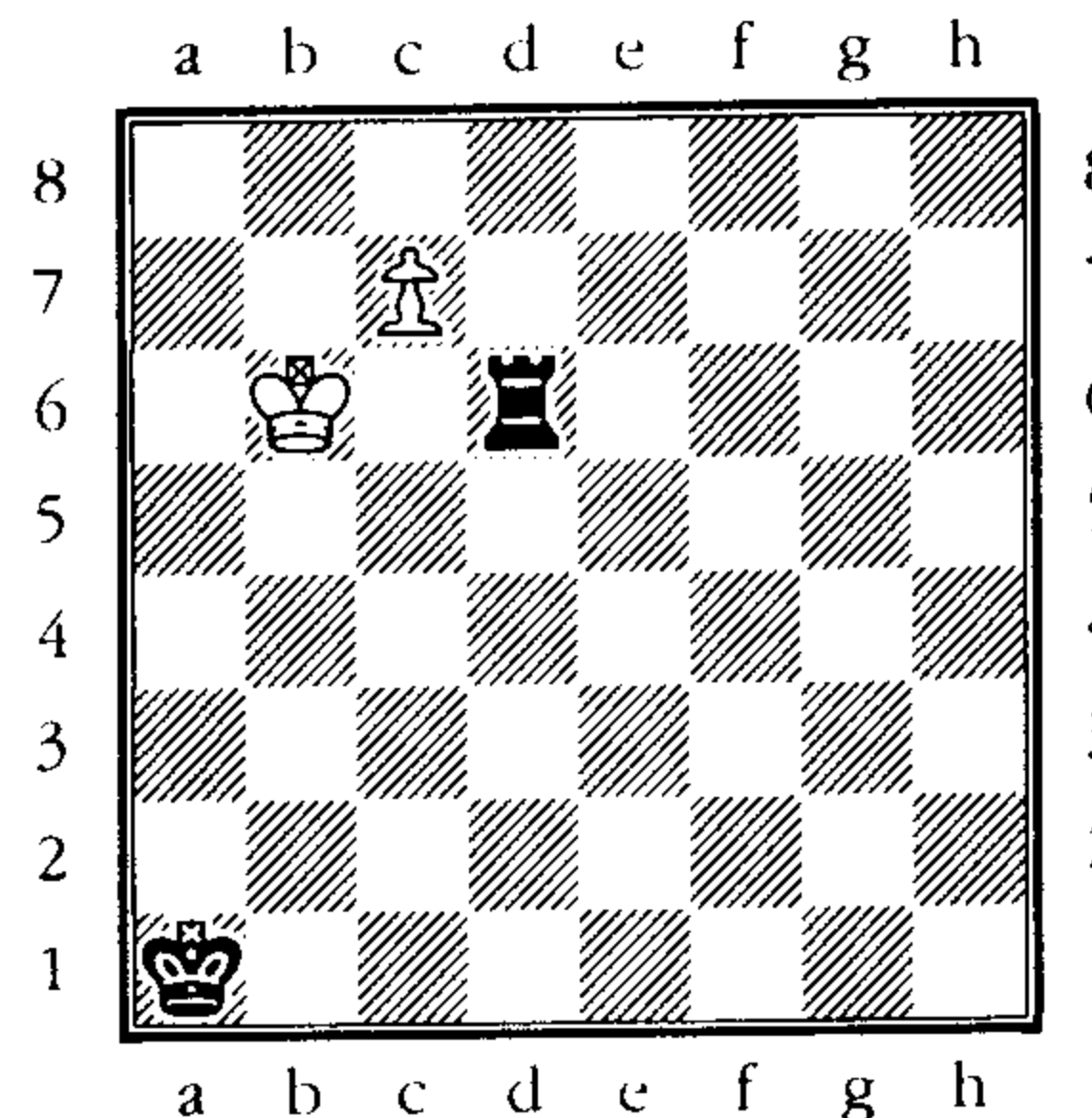
Other moves offer nothing, e.g. 2 ♔c4 ♖d1 when Black can play ♖d1-c1 next move.

2...♖d4+ 3 ♔b3 ♖d3+ 4 ♔c2

The 'dancing' between the king and rook is complete but the fun isn't over yet!

4...♖d4!

With an evil plot afoot!



5 c8=♖!!

A Roland for his Oliver! After 5 c8=♖ Black can draw with 5...♖c4+! 6 ♖xc4 stalemate! Now White threatens ♖c8-a8+ mating so Black's next move is forced.

5...♖a4 6 ♖b3 and Black is powerless to save his rook as ♖c8-c1 mate is on the cards.

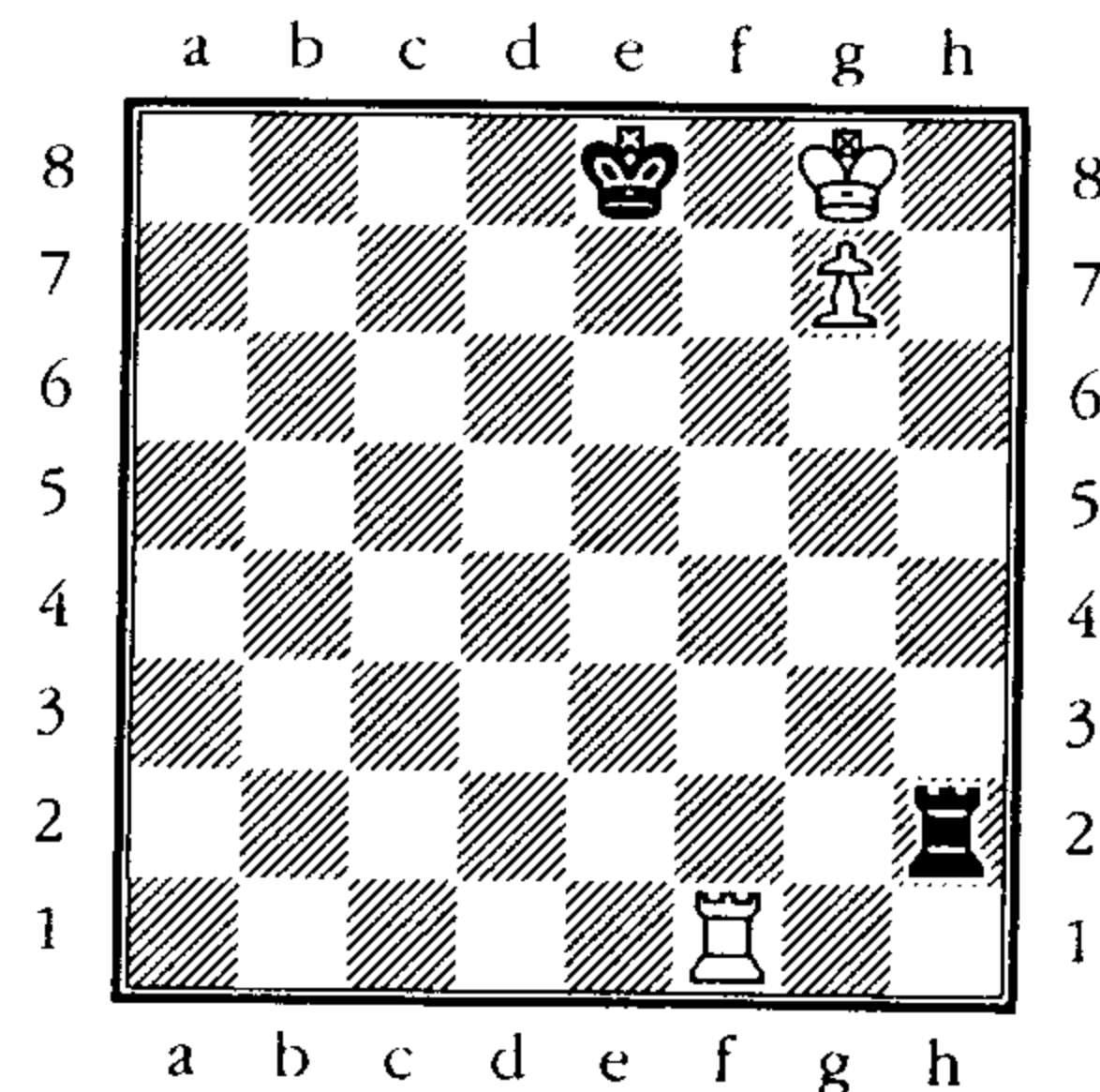
In endgames, pawns can take on a life of their own and tactics based on promotional ideas are far more common than in any other part of the game. One reason for this of course is that your opponent has more limited forces to prevent pawns getting through, especially if they are passed. The other major difference between the endgame and other parts of the game is that all of a sudden the king can become a major attacking force as opposed to something we 'tuck away' behind a wall of pawns for safekeeping. So my advice to you is to be vigilant, look for an opportunity and then pounce—you will be surprised at the benefits you will reap!

13) Endgame technique

'And the rest is just technique'—how often have you heard that phrase and what does it mean? Now as far as I'm concerned you should have enough about yourself to buy Fine's book on endgames, or an equivalent, in order to learn about basic mates and king and pawn against king. However I want to start this chapter with a section on rook and pawn vs. rook endings. The reason for this is that not only are rook and pawn endings very common but in some of them the 'techniques' require more than just

'the moves played' and analysis, they require some down to earth explanations of the why's and wherefore's. Following that, we will look at positions where a player must decide when to (or not to) alter the nature of a position and enter into a rook and pawn ending.

The general rule in a rook and pawn vs. rook ending is that if the defending king controls the queening square it should be drawn and if the attacking king controls the queening square it should be won (one notable exception being the rook's pawn which has considerations of its own). The most important position of all in terms of winning technique is known as the **Lucena Position**, first discovered by the Spanish author towards the end of the 15th(!) century, which goes as follows:



1...♖h3

After 1...♖e2 2 ♖h1 followed by ♖g8-h8 and g7-g8 wins.

2 ♖f4!

Known as 'building the bridge'.

2...♖h1 3 ♖e4+ ♖d7 4 ♖f7 ♖f1+ 5 ♖g6 ♖g1+ 6 ♖f6 ♖f1+

Alternatives are;

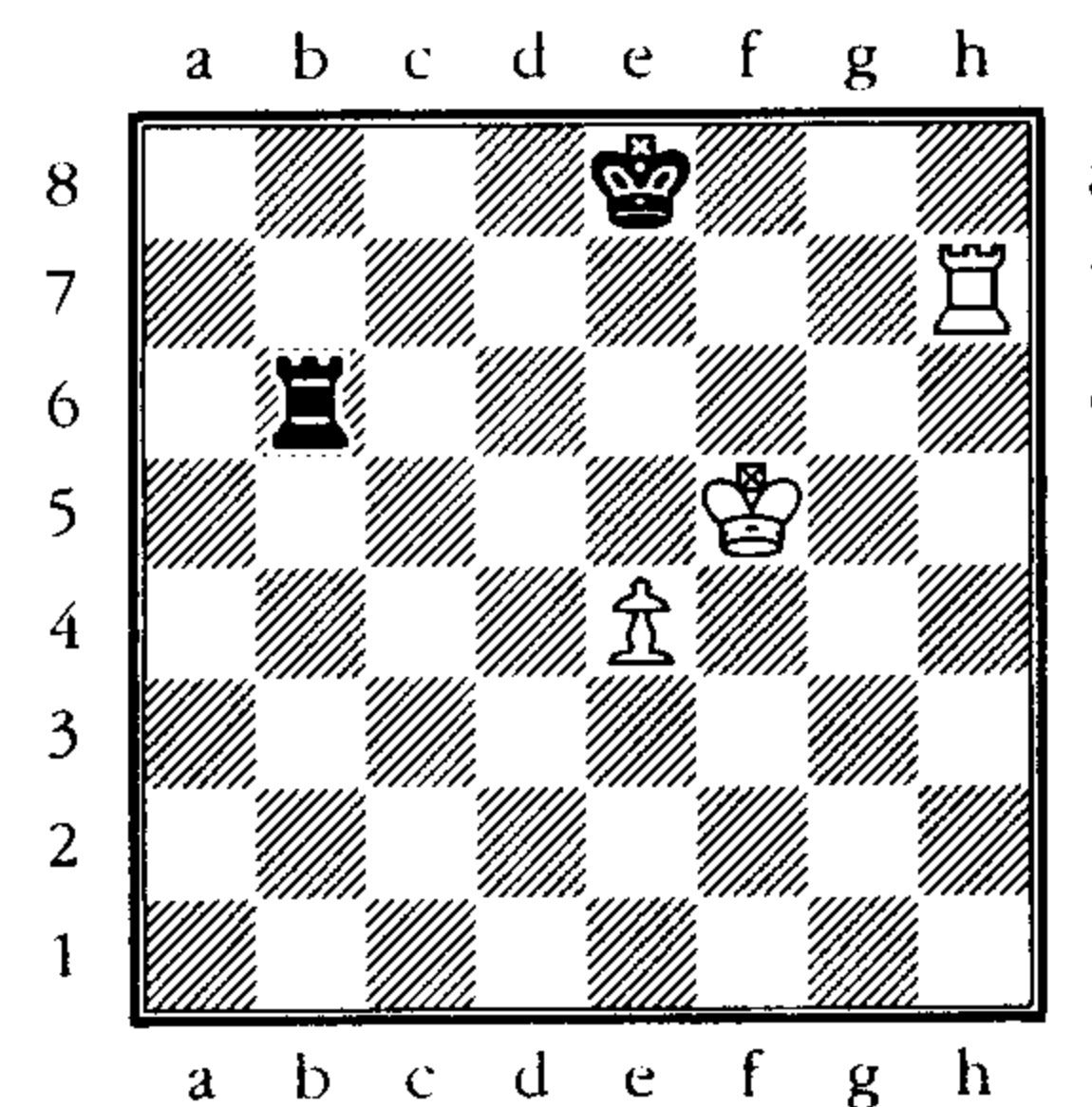
a) 6...♖g2 7 ♖e5 and White wins with the plan of ♖e5-g5;

b) 6...♖d6 7 ♖d4+ ♖c6 8 ♖d8 ♖f1+ 9 ♖e5 ♖e1+ 10 ♖f4 etc.,

7 ♖g5 ♖g1+ 8 ♖g4

And White wins.

Now we will look at one of the 'standard' drawing techniques:



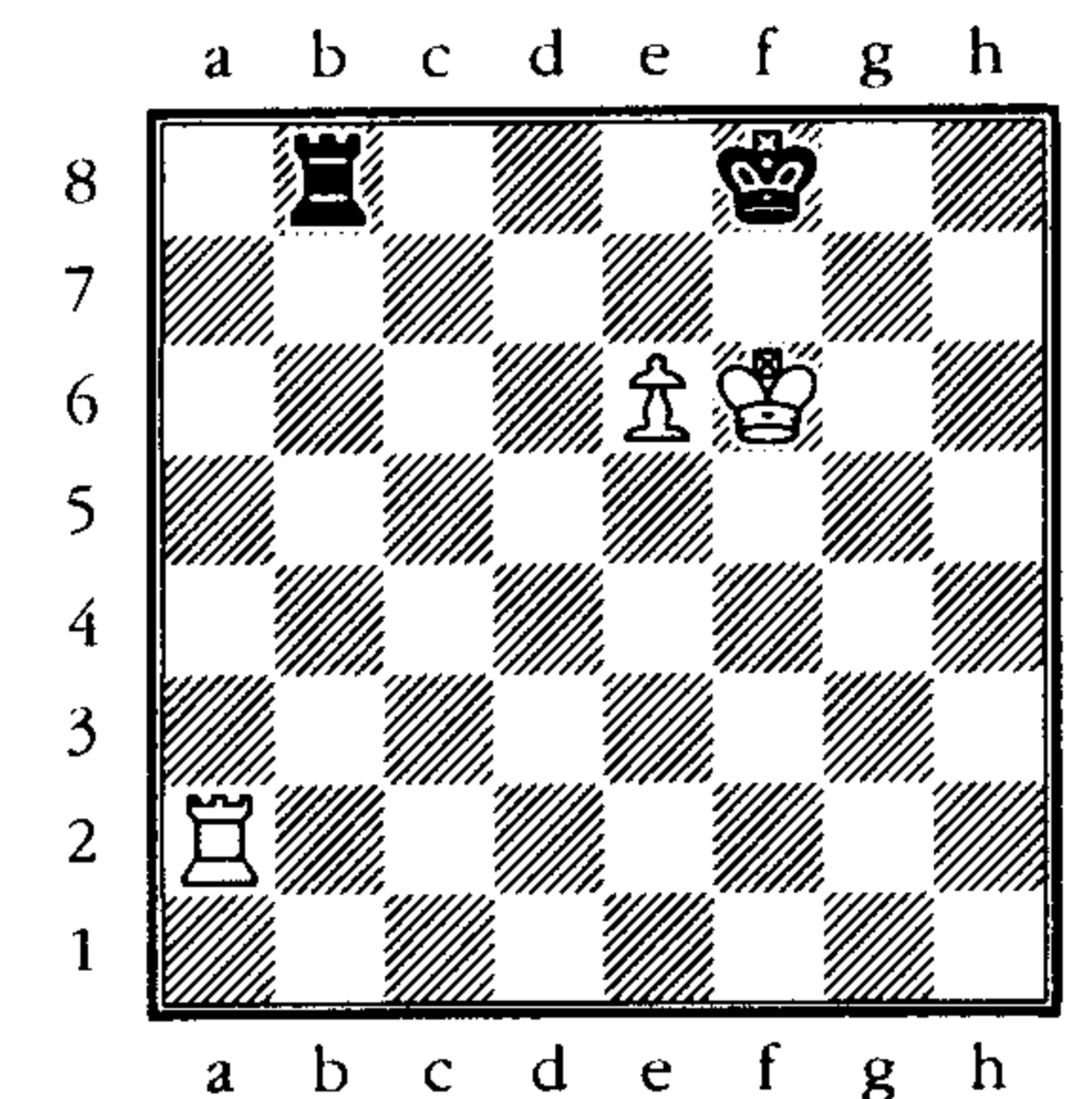
The basic technique is for Black to keep his rook on the third rank until the pawn reaches the sixth at which time he moves the rook to the eighth rank ready to keep on checking the white king from the back as, with the pawn on e6, the white king has nowhere to hide. The other relevant factor for Black to keep in mind is when to exchange off into a drawn king and pawn ending—in other words one in which he holds the opposition.

1 e5 ♖a6 2 e6 ♖a1

2...♖b6?? 3 ♖f6 ♖d8 4 ♖h8+ ♖c7 5 ♖f7 and White wins.

3 ♖f6 ♖f1+ 4 ♖e5 ♖e1+ 5 ♖d6 ♖d1+

And White cannot make progress. Notice that even if White could interpose his rook Black could afford to exchange them off and draw the king and pawn ending. The next position demonstrates one of the exceptions to the general rule (in a rook and pawn vs. rook ending, if the defending king controls the queening square it should be drawn and if the attacking king controls the queening square it should be won) in that the defender's rook has to take up a passive position to stop the back rank threats:



1...♖c8

1...♖g8 2 ♖g2+ ♖f8 3 e7+ ♖e8 4 ♖g8+ ♖d7 5 ♖xb8 winning.

2 ♖h2 ♖g8 3 ♖g2+ ♖h8

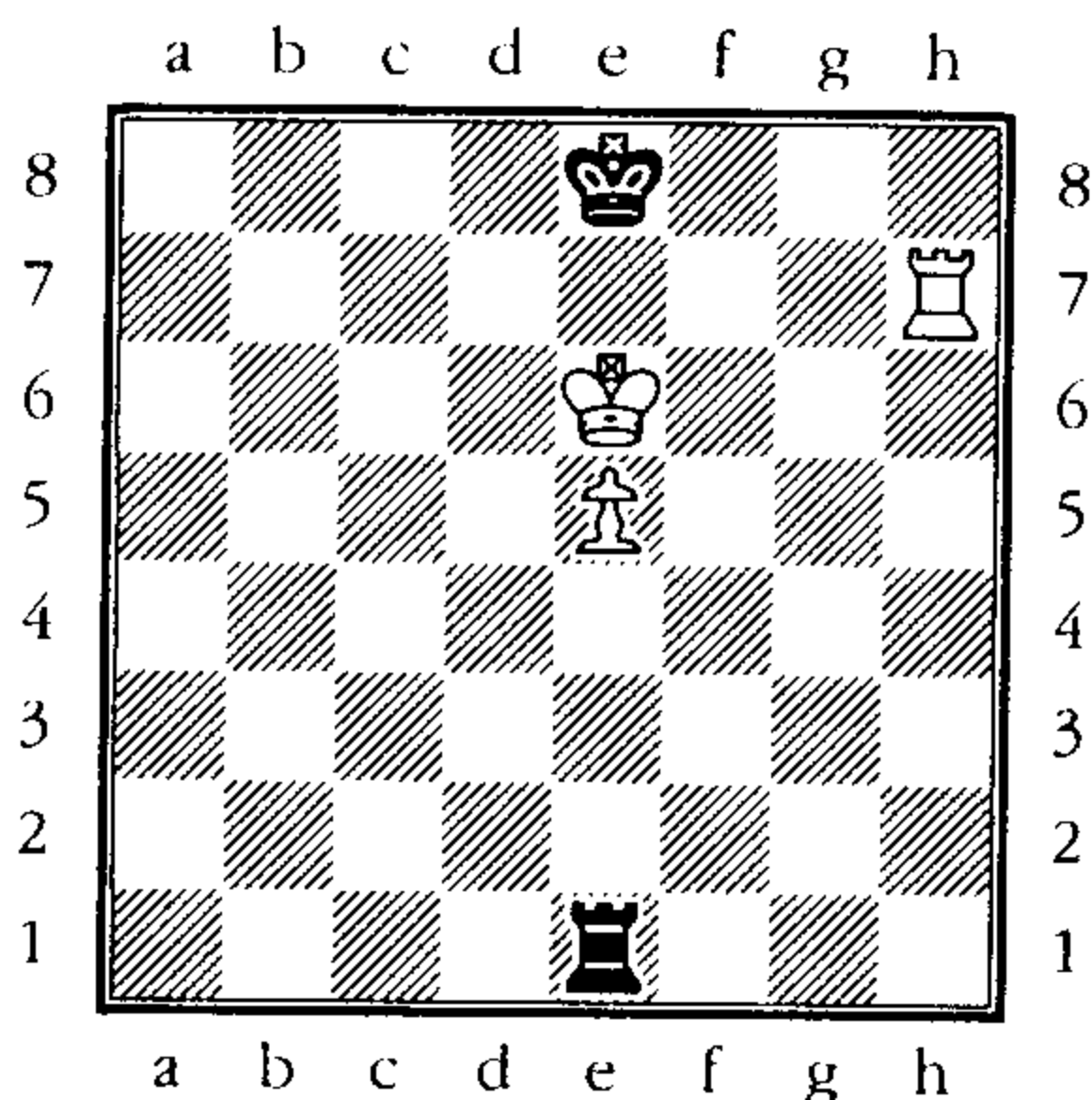
3...♖f8 4 e7+ ♖e8 5 ♖g8+ ♖d7 6 ♖xc8 etc.

4 ♖f7 ♖c7+ 5 e7

The pawn will cost Black his rook.

Sometimes of course it is not so obvious as to who is actually in control of the queening square and other problems have to be attended to. One of the most common of

these is when the defender has been checked and needs to decide whether to move his king to the 'short' or the 'long' side. For example:



1...♔f8!

Black correctly chooses to go to the 'short side'. The principle is to leave the 'long side' available for the rook to give checks. 1...♔d8 might not actually lose in this particular position but it is a step in the wrong direction and requires more accurate defence.

2 ♖h8+

2 ♔d6 doesn't achieve anything as 3 e6 allows ...♗d1+ etc.

2...♔g7 3 ♗e8

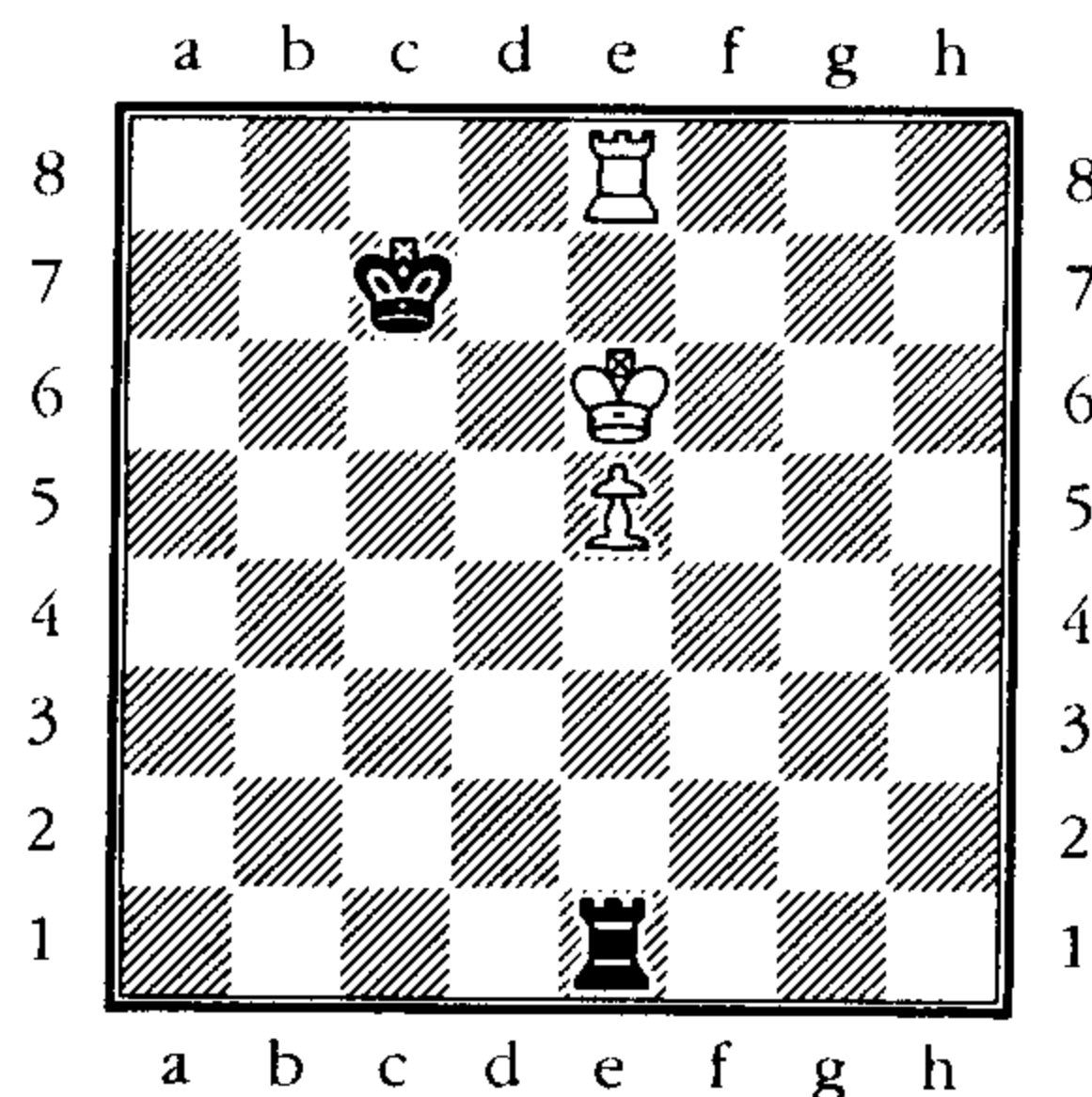
White would like to relieve his king from its duty of guarding the e-pawn. After 3 ♗a8 Black can draw with 3...♗e2 4 ♔d6 ♔f7! 5 ♗a7+ ♔e8 6 ♔e6 etc.

3...♗a1!

Now 4 ♔d7 allows ...♗a7+ when White can make no further progress.

4 ♗d8 ♗e1!

Black has done enough to draw. The following example shows how the defending side is losing as his rook (instead of his king) went to the 'short side'.



1 ♔f7! ♗h1

Otherwise White can play e5-e6 and ♔f7-e7.

2 ♗g8

After 2 e6? ♗h7+ 3 ♔g6 ♗h1 draws.

2...♗h7+ 3 ♗g7 ♗h8

One of the important differences in 'short' over 'long' is that the defender now loses if he exchanges rooks and enters the king and pawn ending.

4 ♔e7!

A mistake would be to play 4 e6? as after 4...♔d6! 5 e7 ♔d7 6 ♗g1 ♗h7+ 7 ♔f8 ♗h8+ (but not 7...♗xe7?? 8 ♗d1+ ♔e6 9 ♗e1+ when White wins) Black draws.

4...♔c6

Black has little choice.

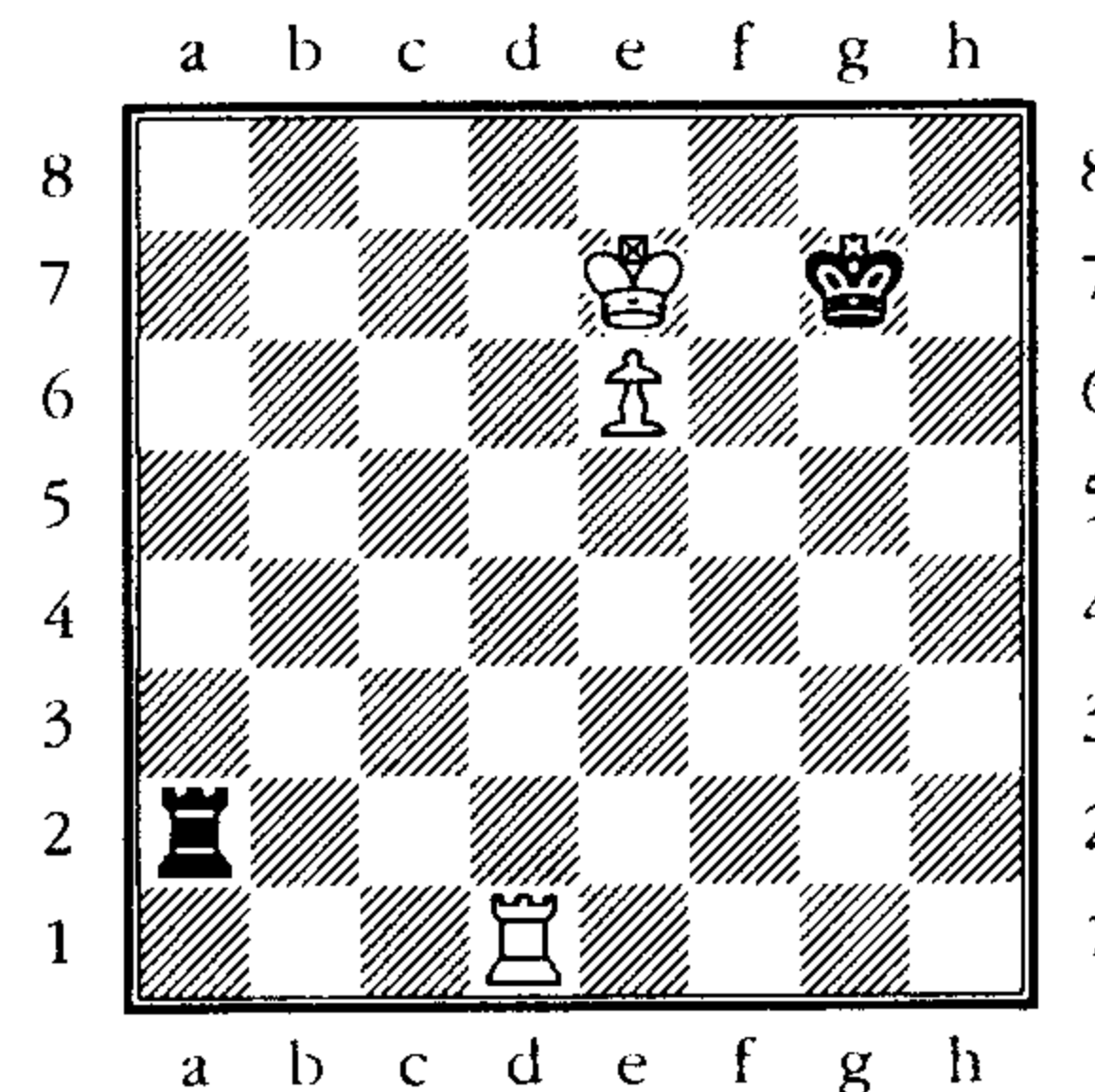
5 e6 ♔c7 6 ♗f7

Zugzwang!

6...♗g8 7 ♗f1 ♗g7+ 8 ♔f6 ♗g2 9 ♗d1

White wins as the Black king is cut off.

The next two positions show the difference between the defender's rook occupying or not occupying a critical file:



White has the threat of ♗g1+ but Black is able to draw precisely because his rook is on the a-file.

1...♗a7+ 2 ♗d7

2 ♔e8 ♔f6 or 2 ♔d6 ♔f8 both draw.

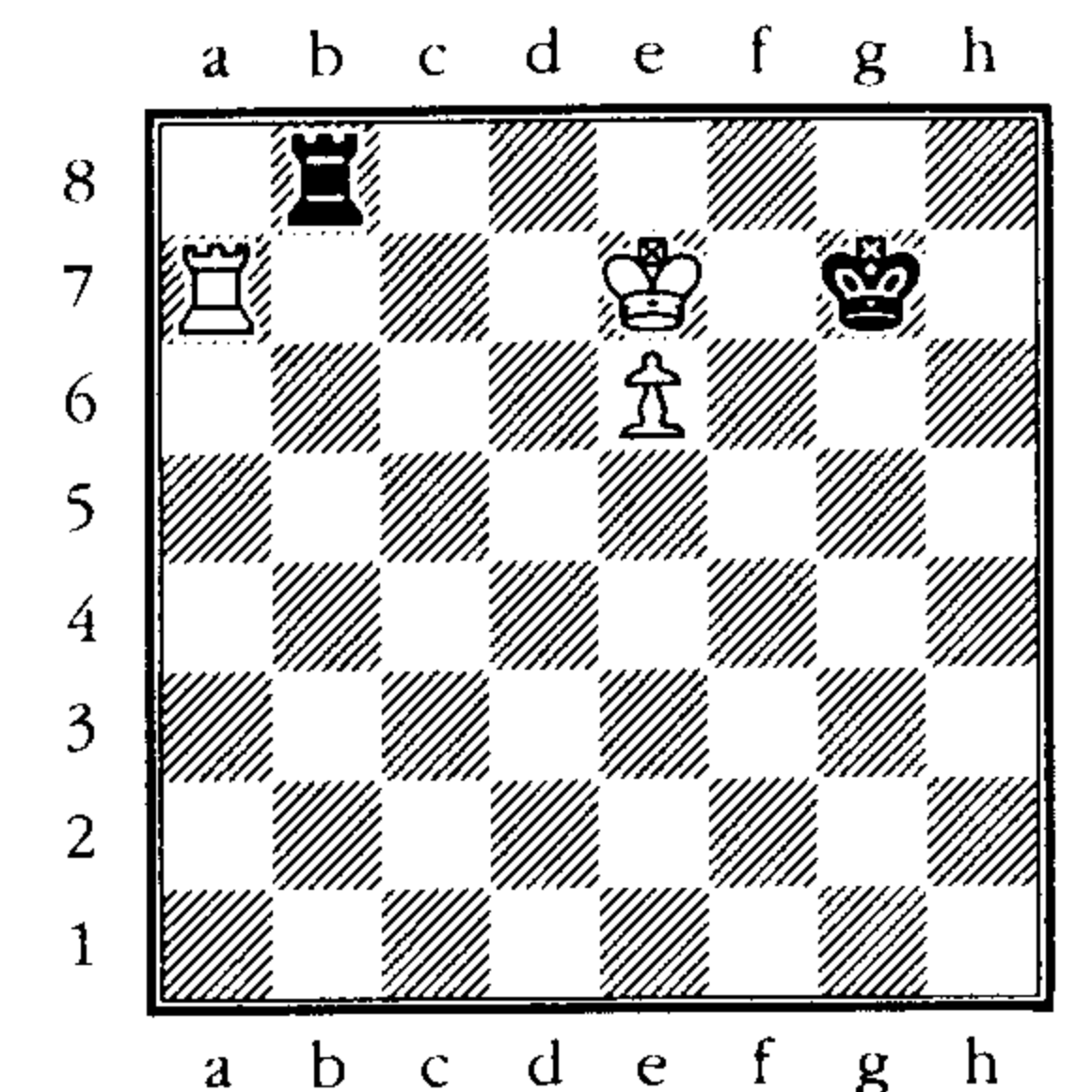
2...♗a1 3 ♔e8+

3 ♔d6+ ♔f6 4 ♗f7+ ♔g6 5 ♗c7! to stop Black's continual checks along the a-file. Note if Black's rook were on the b-file he would run out of checks after 5 ♗f2; alternatively 3 ♗d6 ♗a8! (3...♗a2? 4 ♔e8! ♔f6 5 e7+ wins—it is the fact that it is check that is the killer)

3...♔f6 4 e7 ♔e6! 5 ♔f8 ♗f1+! 6 ♔e8 ♗a1

And Black draws.

Next an example of how White can win if it is *he* who controls the a-file:



An important position. With White to move the win is not easy to find:

1 ♔d6+!

If it had been Black to move, however, he would have been in zugzwang(!) as the following analysis shows: 1...♔g6 (1...♔g8 2 ♗a1 wins or 1...♗b1 2 ♗a8! ♗b7+ 3 ♔d6 ♗b6+ 4 ♔d7 ♗b7+ 5 ♔c6 ♗e7 6 ♔d6 and again White wins) 2 ♗a1! ♗b7+ 3 ♔d6 ♗b6+ 4 ♔d7 ♗b7+ 5 ♔c6 ♗b2 (5...♗b8 6 ♔c7 ♗e8 7 ♔d7 wins and after 5...♗e7 6 ♔d6 White wins as 6...♔f6 can be met by 7 ♗f1+) 6 ♗e1! (Now the passed pawn is dominant as the black king cannot return to prevent it from queening) 6...♗b8 7 ♔d7! ♗b7+ 8 ♔c8 ♗e7 (after 8...♗a7 then 9 e7 ♗a8+ 10 ♔d7 wins) 9 ♔d8 ♔f6 10 ♗f1+! ♔xe6 11 ♗e1+ and finally White has achieved his goal.

1...♔f6

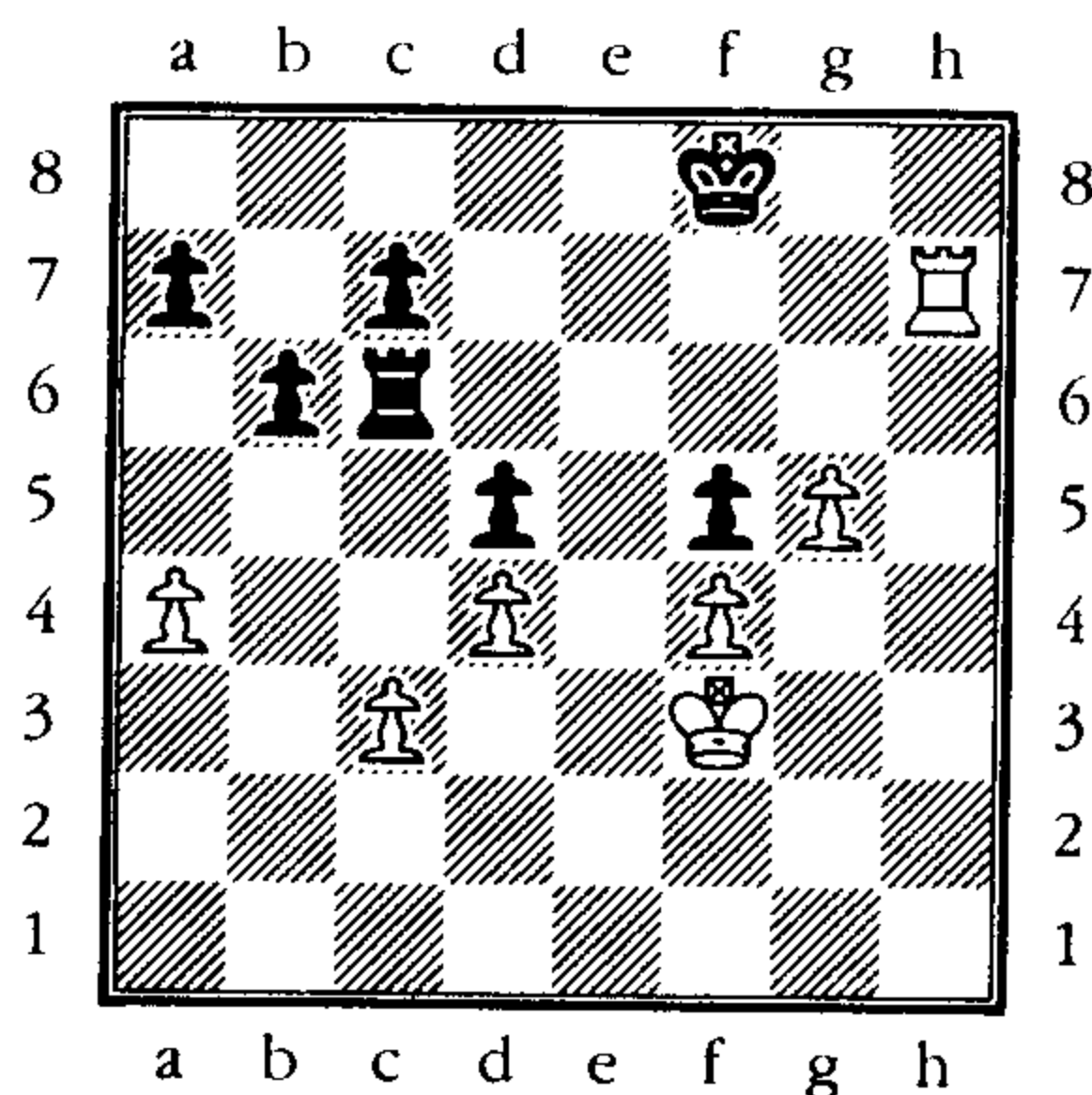
1...♔g6 2 ♗a1! transposes back to the previous note, while 1...♔f8 loses to 2 ♔d7 ♗e8 3 ♗a1 etc.

2 ♔d7! ♔g7 3 ♔e7!

By means of a subtle triangulation White has transposed back to the original position where it is now *Black* to move! The note to White's first move shows that Black, to move, can no longer save the position. Therefore it is an absolute priority to control the a-file (or the h-file if originally White had a d-pawn instead of the e-pawn).

I was very impressed by the way White handled the following position:

White: José Capablanca
Black: Savielly Tartakower
New York, 1924



Although White must lose a pawn he has compensation in the fact that the black king is trapped on the back rank. This is where a strong player's judgement is often crystal-clear. White realises that, as well as a passed pawn and a rook on the seventh, it is also necessary to activate his king.

35 ♔g3!! ♖xc3+ 36 ♔h4

White now has a straightforward plan, that of playing g5-g6, ♔h4-g5xf5 when the speed of the

connected passed pawns will be decisive.

36...♖f3

Black attempts to leave White with a single passed pawn but this is not enough to salvage the game.

37 g6 ♖xf4+ 38 ♔g5 ♖e4 39 ♔f6!

There is no need to hurry and take the pawn, in fact it is more useful to leave it where it is so that it blocks checks from the back along the 'f'-file.

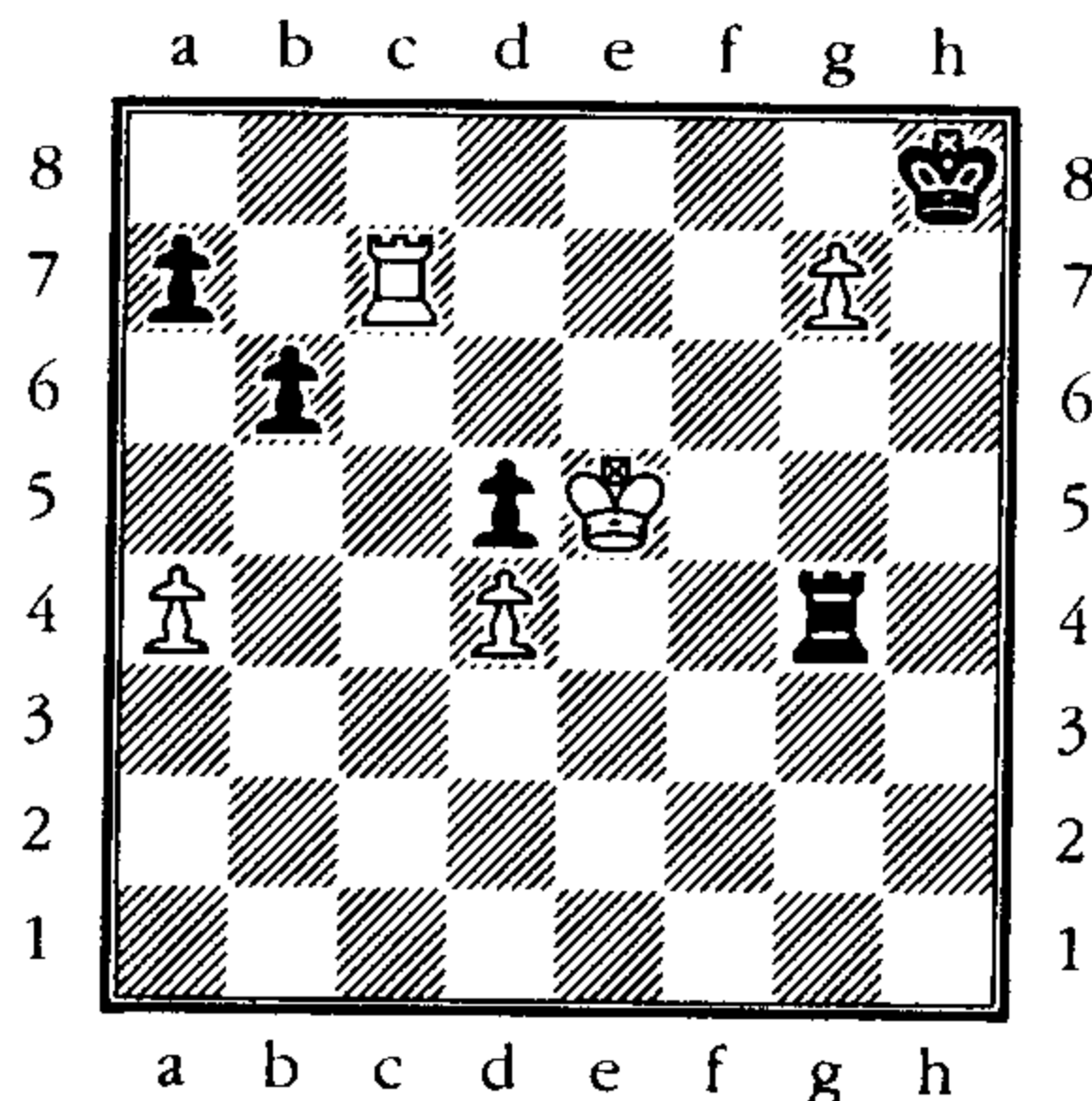
39...♔g8 40 ♖g7+!

On 40 ♖h2 ♖g4! stops g6-g7 and ♖h2-h8 mate, so White has little better than returning the rook to h7.

40...♔h8 41 ♖xc7 ♖e8 42 ♔xf5

Level on pieces at last! However there is a difference somewhat in activity, king safety and promotional possibilities!

42...♖e4 43 ♔f6 ♖f4+ 44 ♔e5 ♖g4 45 g7+!



This ties down Black's pieces still further as the king and pawn ending is hopeless after 45...♖xg7 46 ♖xg7 ♔xg7 47 ♔xd5 ♔f7 48 ♔c6 etc.

45...♔g8 46 ♖xa7 ♖g1 47 ♔xd5

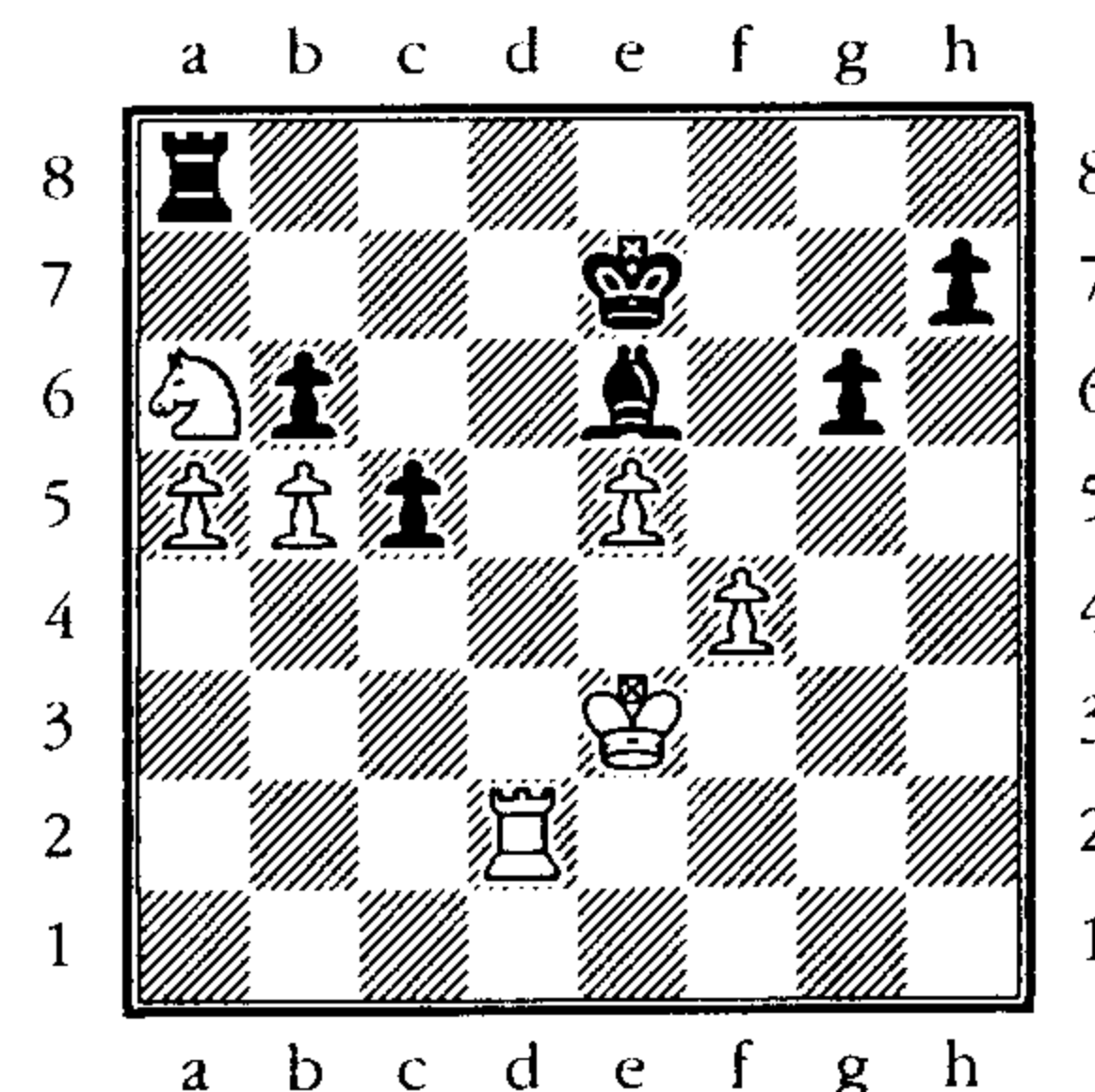
Another one bites the dust!

47...♖c1 48 ♔d6 ♖c2 49 d5 ♖c1 50 ♖c7 ♖a1 51 ♔c6 ♖xa4 52 d6 1-0

Enough is enough!

Next, one of my own endings. Although Coulsdon (my team) had already won the match, against a strong (and now sadly defunct) Mitcham side, I was determined to try to win the adjournment. This was not only due to the fact that I thought I was better but also because of my previous (and very painful) loss to John and the fact that I had let a more obvious advantage slip earlier in the game.

White: Chris Baker
Black: John Saunders
Coulsdon v Mitcham
Surrey League



37...bxa5

Thanks to his adjournment analysis Black managed to avoid 37...♔c8? when after 38 axb6 ♔xa6 39 bxa6 ♖xa6 40 ♖b2 ♖a8 41 b7 ♖b8 42 ♔e4 the white king will infiltrate via d5.

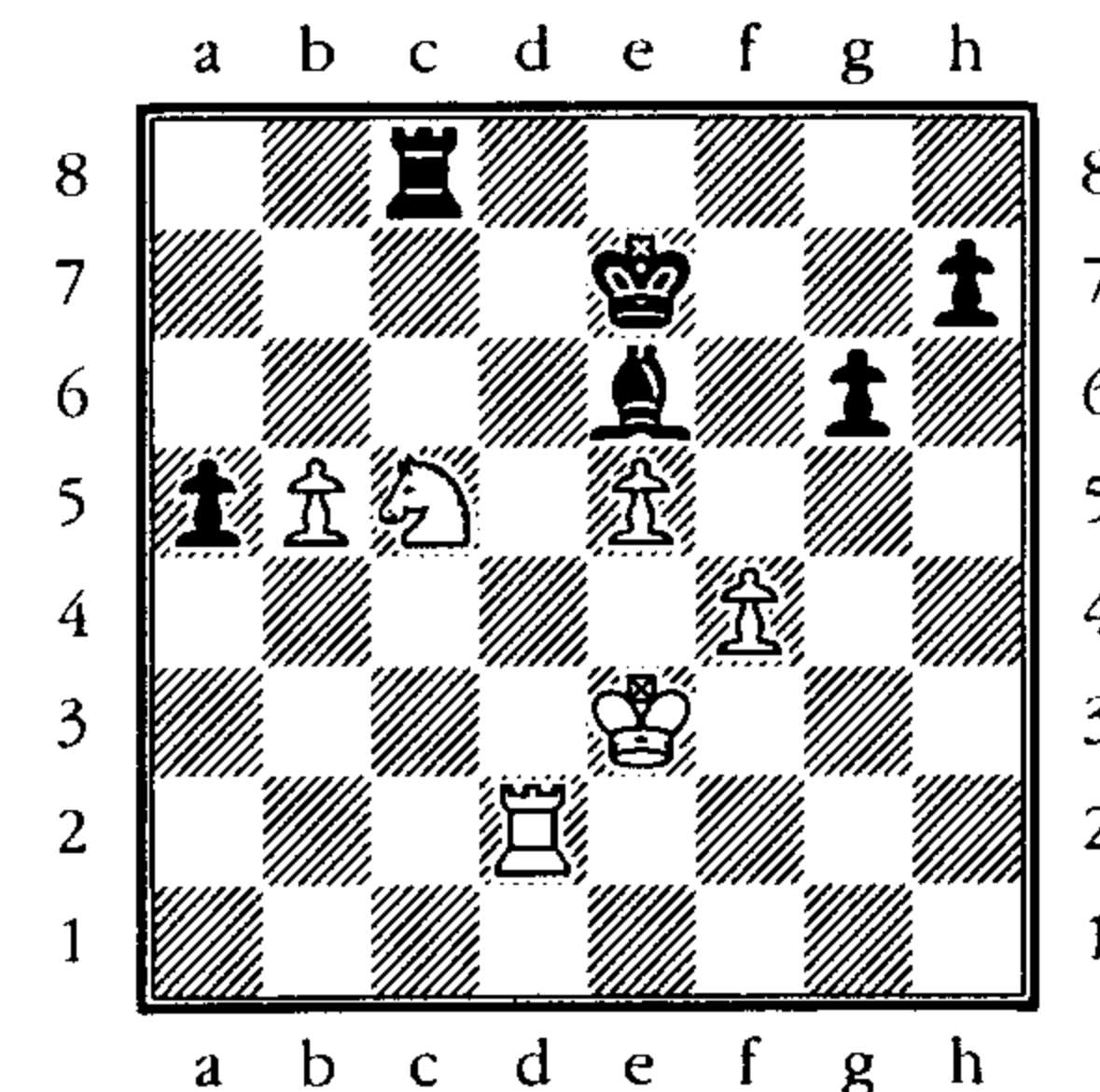
38 ♔xc5 ♖c8!

Much stronger than either:

a) 38...♖b8? This fairly natural move of placing the rook behind White's passed pawn proves insufficient after 39 ♖b2 when Black will find it difficult to stop b5-b6-b7 and the ideas of ♔c5-a6 or ♖b2-b6-a6-a8, e.g. 39...♔d7 (39...♖b6 is likely to transpose after 40 ♔a4 ♖b8 41 b6 ♔d7 42 ♔c5) 40 b6 a4 41 b7 ♔c6 42 ♖b6! ♔g2 43 ♖a6 ♔xb7 44 ♖a7 a3 45 ♔xb7 a2 when 46 ♔c5+ is check.

b) 38...a4!?—pushing his own passed pawn—39 b6 a3 40 b7 ♖b8 41 ♖d6! and the black bishop cannot maintain its key position along both the g8-a2 and c8-h3 diagonals, although after 41...♔c4 42 ♖d7+ ♔e8 43 ♖xh7 a2 44 ♖h8+ ♔e7 45 ♖xb8 a1=♖ 46 ♖e8+ ♔xe8 (46...♔f7 47 b8=♖ ♖g1+ 48 ♔e4 ♖xc5 49 ♖d8 should be enough to secure White the full point) 47 b8=♖+ ♔f7 White has the advantage although the position remains 'unstable'.

39 ♔xé6



a) 39 ♖c2? a4 when, due to White's self pin on the 'c'-file, it is Black who has the advantage.

b) 39 ♔d4?! a4! utilising the tactic 40 ♖xa4?? ♜c4+.

39...♙xe6

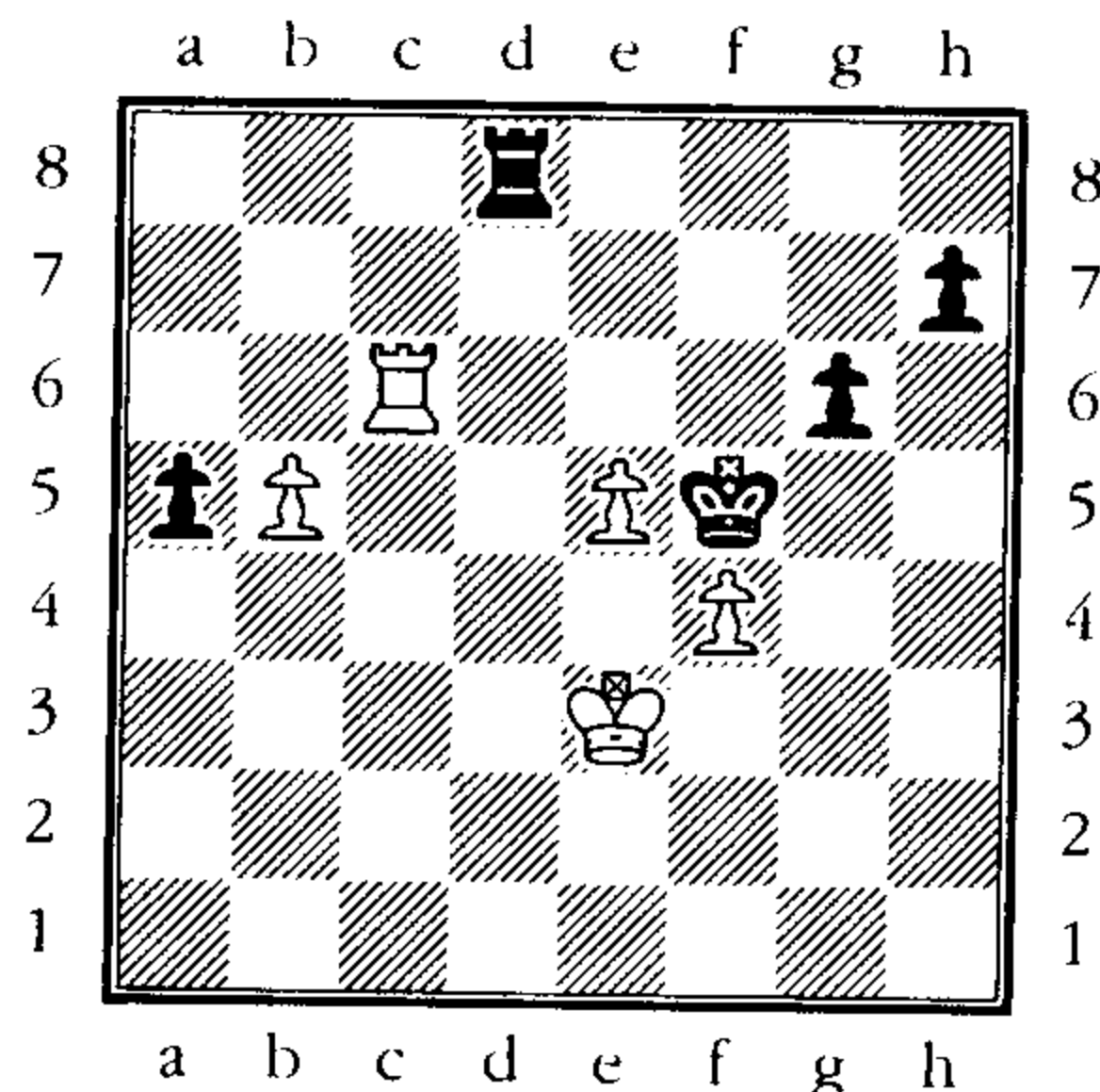
It was this rook and pawn ending that occupied most of my adjournment analysis.

40 ♜d6+ ♙f5 41 ♜c6! ♜d8!

Necessary as:

a) 41...♜b8?? 42 ♙f3 ♜f8 (to stop the mate on f6) 43 ♜f6+ ♜xf6 44 exf6 ♙xf6 45 b6 and White queens first.

b) 41...♜xc6?? 42 bxc6 ♙e6 43 ♔d4 a4 44 ♙c5 a3 45 c7 ♔d7 46 ♙b6 a2 47 e6+ ♙c8 (47...♙e7 48 c8=♚ a1=♚ 49 ♚d7+ ♙f6 50 ♚f7 mate) 48 e7 ♔d7 (48...a1=♚ 49 e8=♚ mate) 49 c8=♚+ ♙xc8 50 e8=♚ mate.



42 ♜f6+

Not a move that I wanted to play as it activated the black king. Moreover it would have been nice to keep the ♙e3-f3 and ♜c6-f6 mate possibility 'in the bag'. However alternatives appear no better, e.g.

a) 42 b6?! ♜d1! 43 ♜f6+ ♙g4 44 b7 ♜b1 45 ♜f7 a4 46 ♜xh7 (46 e6?

a3 47 e7 a2 48 e8=♚ ♜e1+ when it is obviously Black who is on top) 46...a3 47 ♜g7 with a strange draw e.g. 47...♙f5 (47...♙h5 48 ♜h7+ ♙g4 49 ♜g7 etc.), 48 ♜f7+ ♙g4 (48...♙e6 49 ♜f6+ ♙d5 50 ♜d6+ ♙c5 51 ♜a6) 49 ♜g7 drawing.

b) 42 ♜a6 ♜d5 43 ♜xa5 g5! 44 fxg5 ♙xe5! (the safer option, now White is unable to make satisfactory progress after 44...♜xe5+!? 45 ♔d4 ♙f4 46 ♙c4 ♜xg5—or 46...♙xg5! 47 b6 ♜xa5 48 b7 when Black has constructed a fortress—47 b6 ♜g8 48 ♜h5 ♜g7 49 ♔d5 and Black still has problems) 45 ♜a7 ♜xb5 46 ♜xh7 ♙f5 47 ♜g7 ♜b4 with a draw.

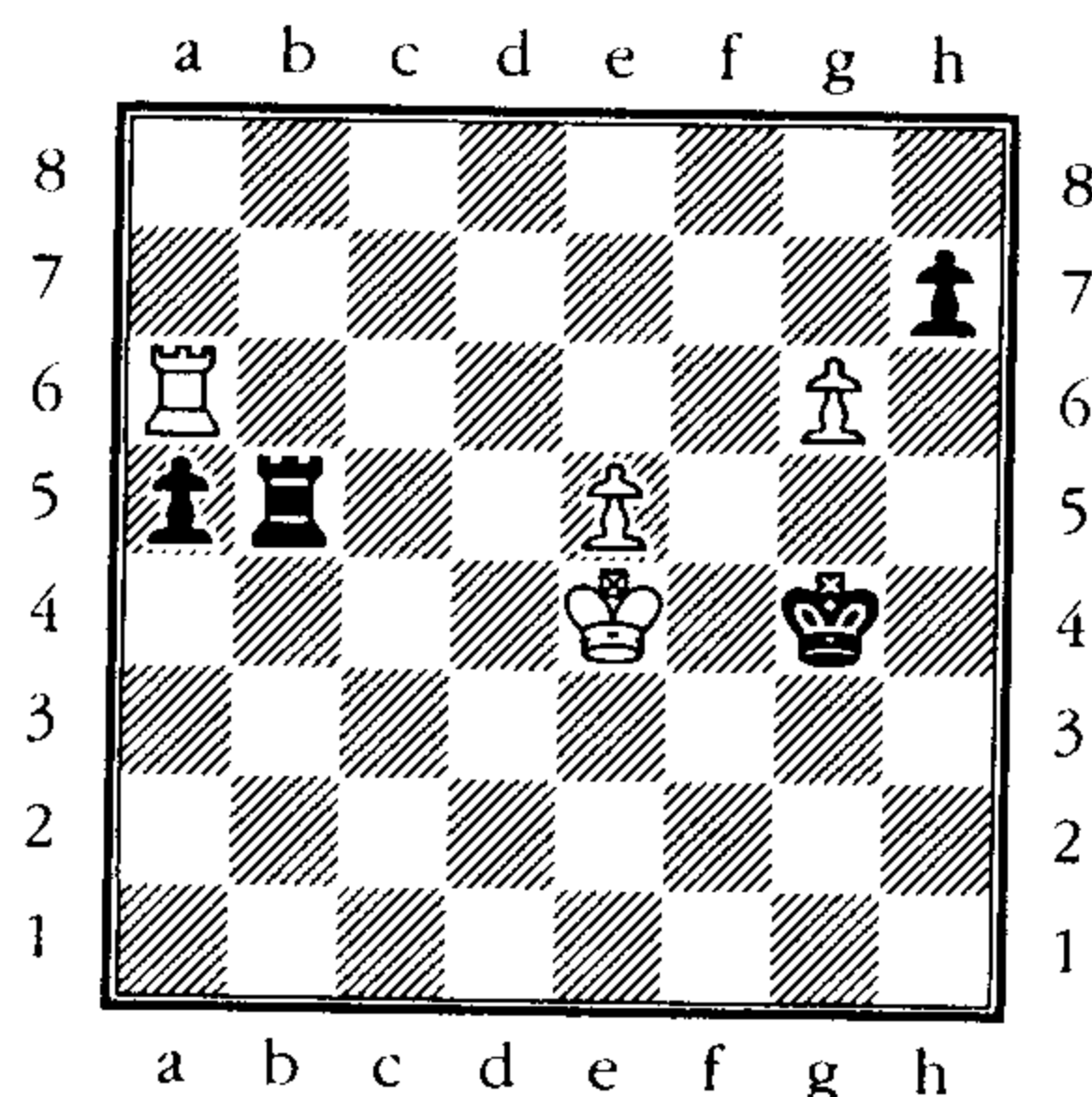
42...♙g4 43 ♜a6 g5!

Now that ♜f6+ ♙g4, f5 is no longer a possibility, this move breaks up the white pawns.

44 fxg5 ♜d5! 45 ♙e4

45 ♜xa5 ♜xe5+ 46 ♔d4 ♜xg5 is an easy draw.

45...♜xb5 46 g6!



Attempting one more trick and the only real justification for White to play on. Black mustn't take his eye off the ball.

46...♜b4+!

46...hxg6 47 ♜xg6+ ♙h5 48 ♜g8 still leaves Black work to do due to his poorly placed king.

47 ♔d5 ♜b5+!

Harassing the White king further. 47...hxg6 draws with best play but gives White some practical chances.

48 ♔d6?!

48 ♔d4 is the last chance for White to play for anything although the game should be drawn with accurate play.

48...hxg6 49 e6 g5 50 e7 ♜b8 51 ♙c7 ♜e8 52 ♔d7 ♜xe7+!

And now Black secures the draw with comfort.

53 ♙xe7 ♙f3! 54 ♜f6+ ♙e3 55 ♜g6 ♙f4 56 ♙e6 g4 57 ♔d5 g3 58 ♔d4 ♙f3 59 ♔d3 g2,60 ♙c4 1/2-1/2

I went into the adjournment thinking I had at least a 70% chance of winning as I obviously had an edge, was ahead on the clock and Black needed to pick his way through the minefield of complications. However, by a combination of accurate play, activity and determination not to settle for 'second best', Black secured the half point. The most important aspect, though, was his correct assessment that he should exchange minor pieces and enter the rook and pawn ending. Often the 'simplest' way of winning an endgame is to simplify the position. Reducing the material to the extent that you recognise the ending as a trivial win also has the 'side effect' of minimising your opponent's counterplay. This can also have a demoralising effect on your adversary as he may have had hopes not only of salvaging half a point but

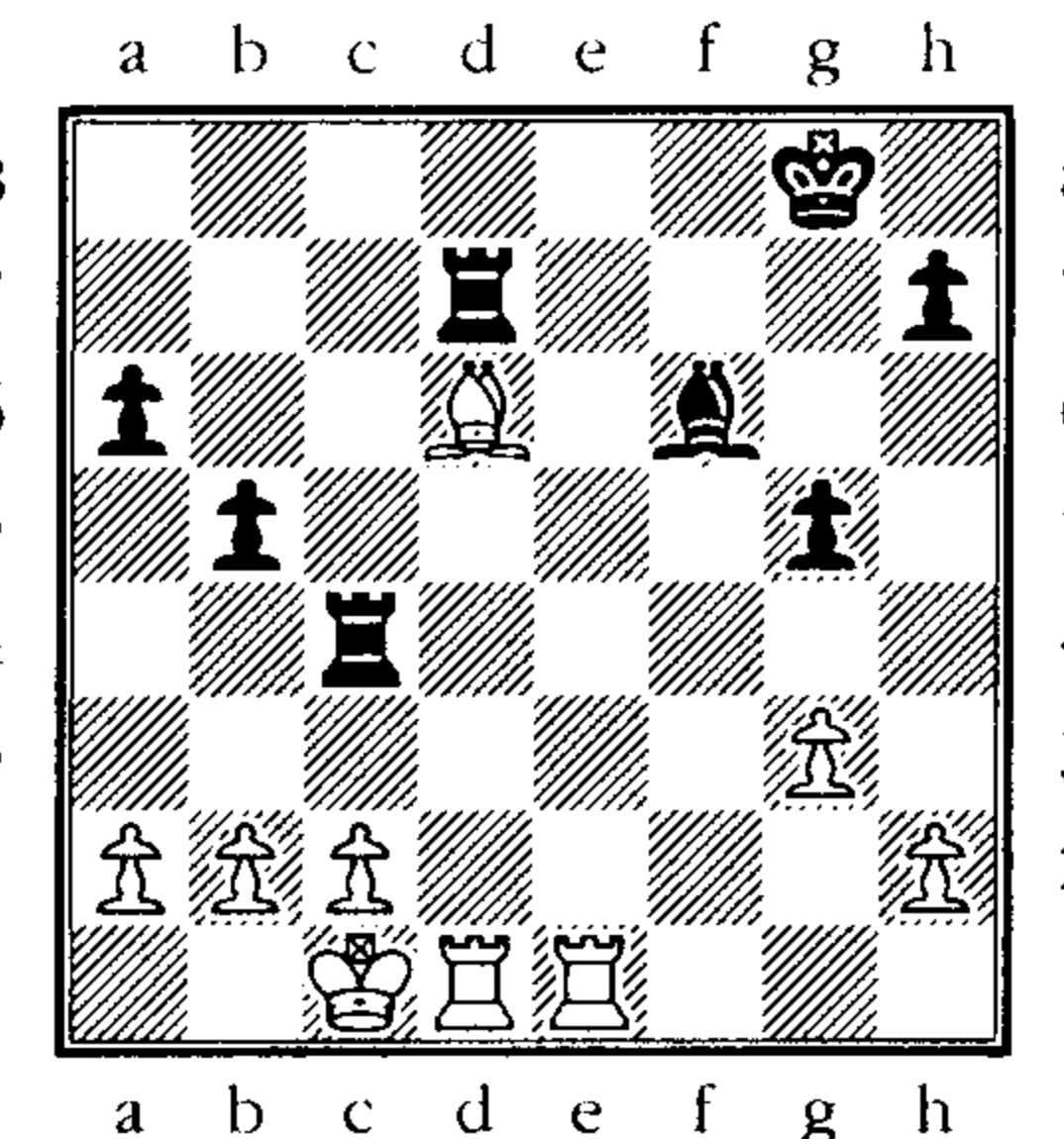
even of 'tricking' you and winning the game himself. Our first example is one showing how *not* to do this.

White: Laurence Jupp

Black: Mark Brierley

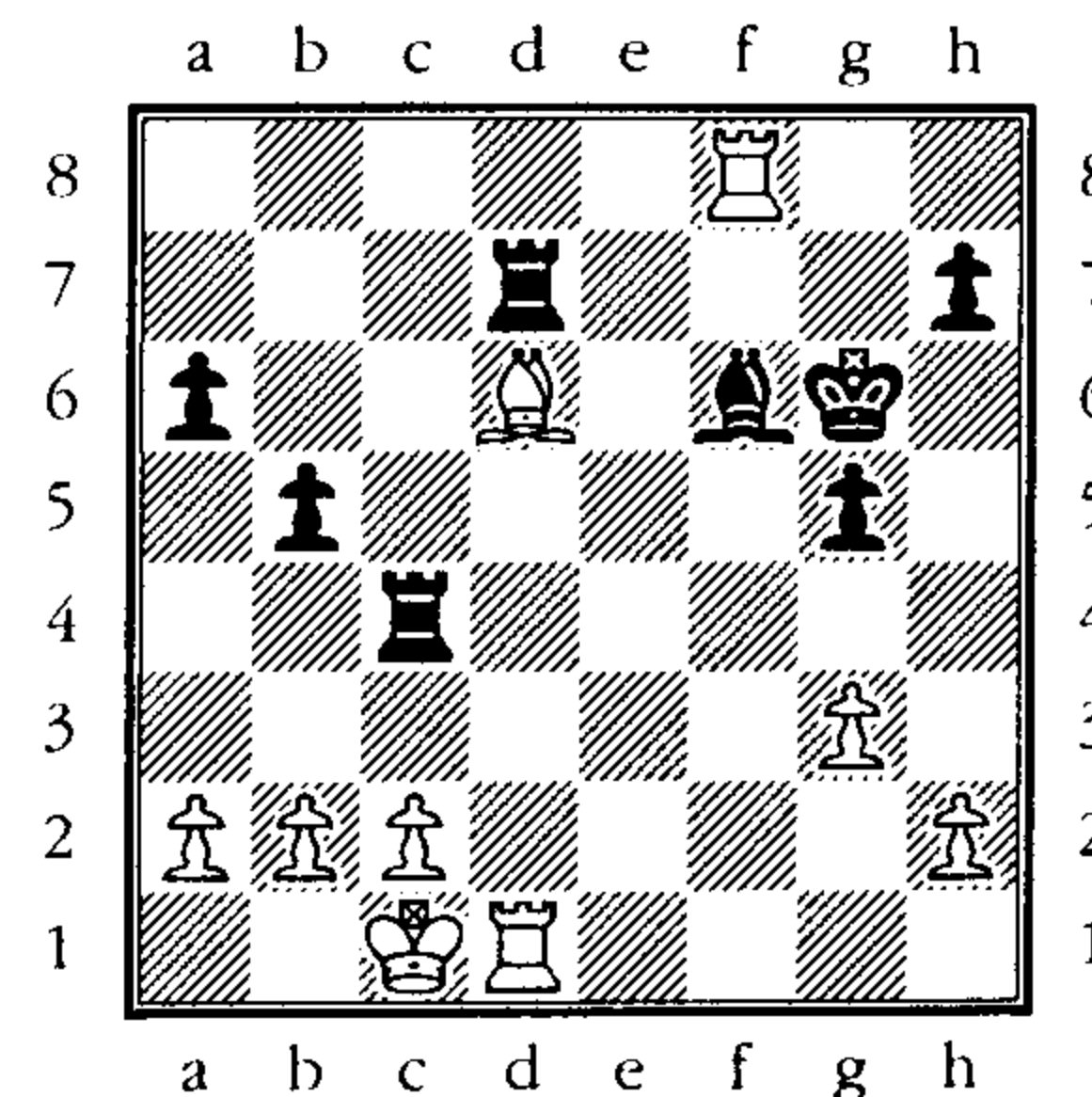
Hanham Open 1997

We pick up the position after Black has just played 25...♜f7-d7.



First of all let us assess the position: White is a pawn to the good and needs only to consolidate his advantage with the simple 26 ♙e5 to leave Black with an uphill struggle to salvage the half point. Instead he goes for the 'simplifying' tactic:

26 ♜e8+ ♙f7 27 ♜f8+ ♙g6



28 ♜xf6+??

It was not too late to play a 'safe' move but White had 'envisaged' a good way to exchange off into a winning rook and pawn ending.

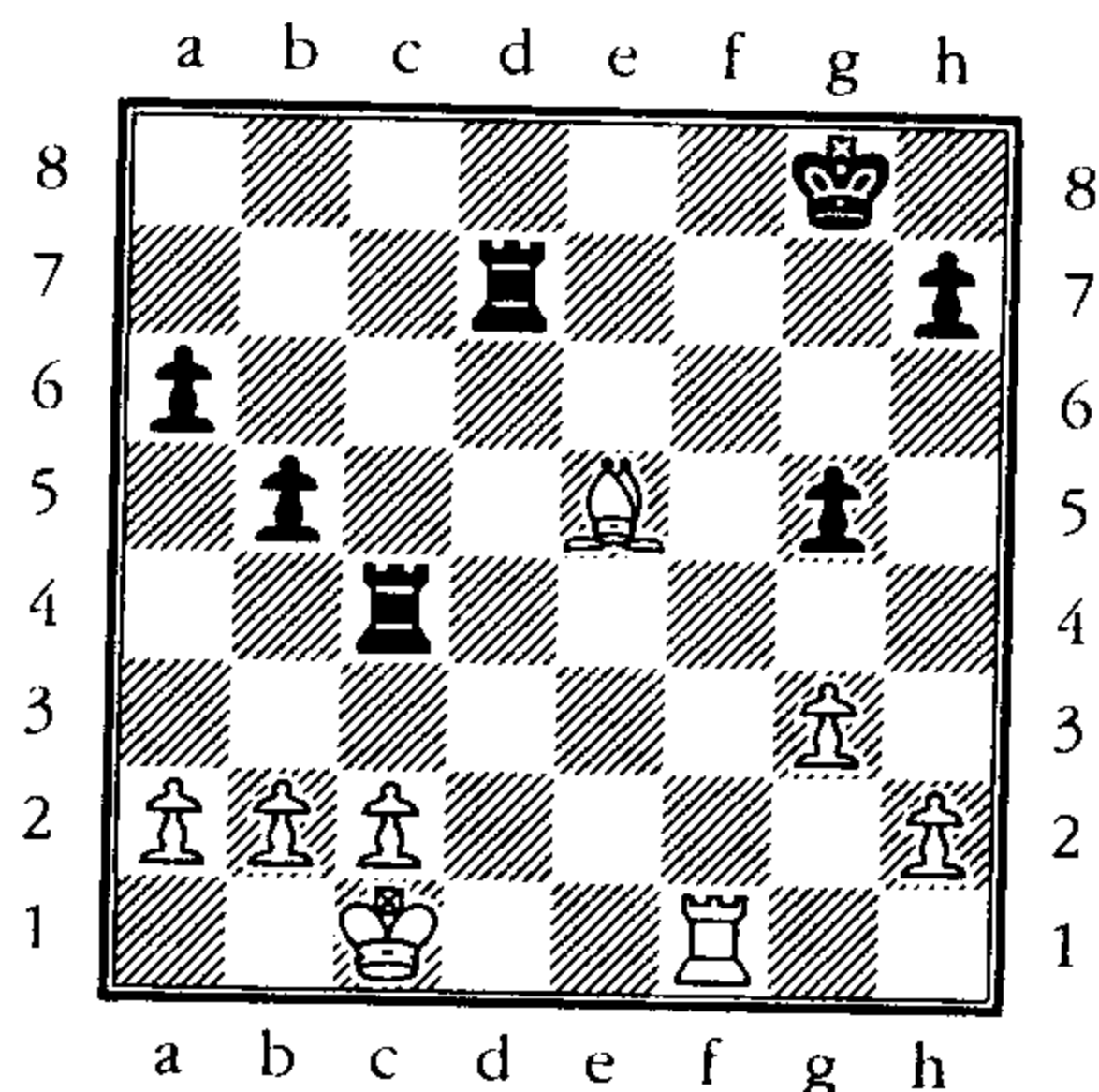
28...♙xf6 29 ♔e5+ ♕e6!

Simple and good, Black has no need to take the bishop on e5. Now White is fighting to survive.

30 ♖e1 ♕f7

30...♕f5!.

31 ♖f1+ ♕g8



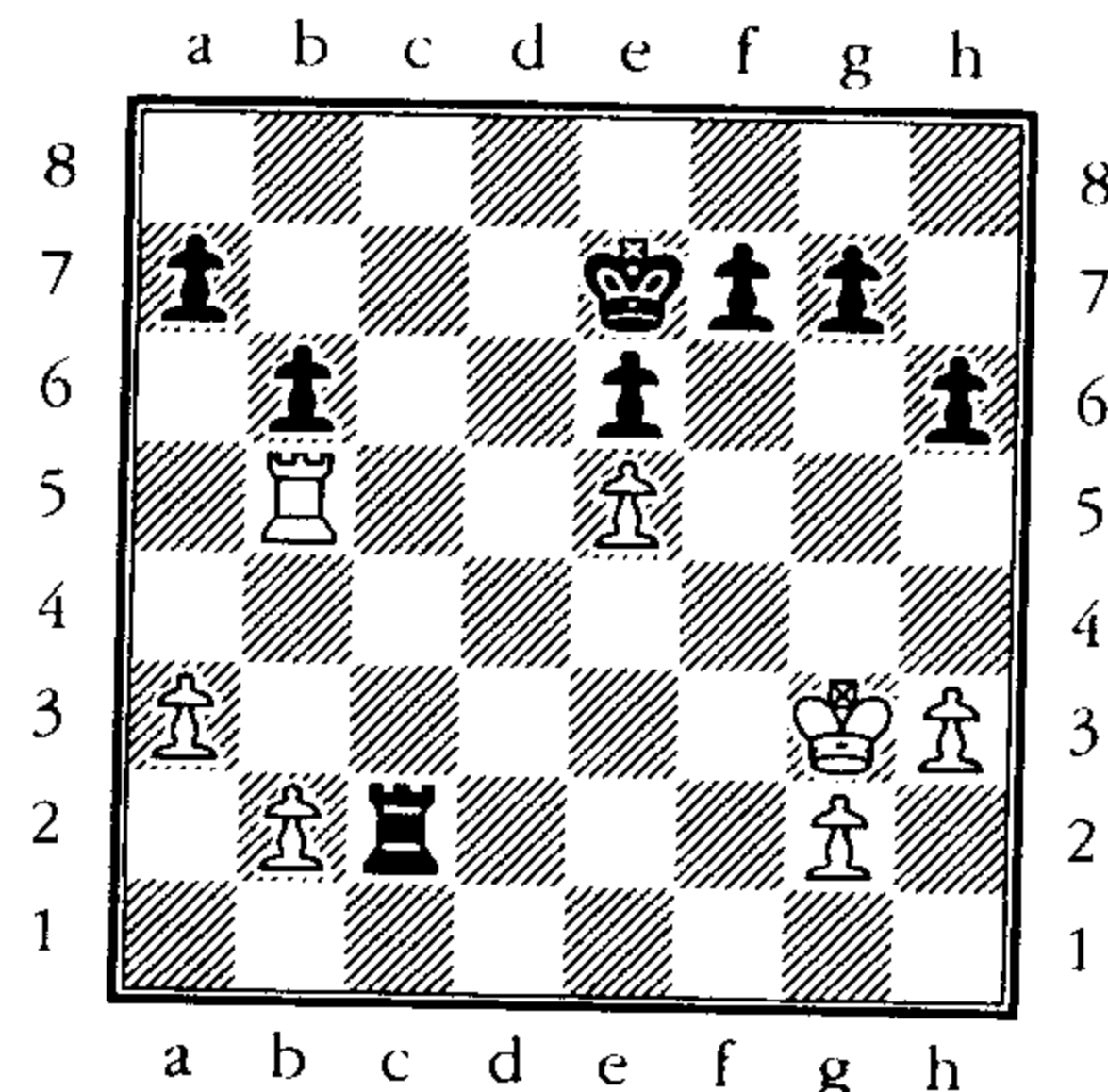
Although it took Black another 27 moves to convert the win, the result was never looking really in doubt. Exchanging off to a 'trivial' win—as opposed to being technically winning—is the mark of a good player.

In the following position Black saved himself an awful lot of work by knowing his king and pawn endings:

White had just played 32 ♕h2-g3 and obviously Black stands much better—he is a pawn ahead and White's pawn on e5 could become a source of weakness. However, if White was able to eliminate the

queenside pawns or infiltrate his rook to the seventh rank he would still have chances of salvaging half a point.

White: John Fletcher
Black: John Hodgson
Jersey Open 2002



However Black, to move, was able to effectively 'wrap things up' with...

32...♖c5! 33 ♖xc5

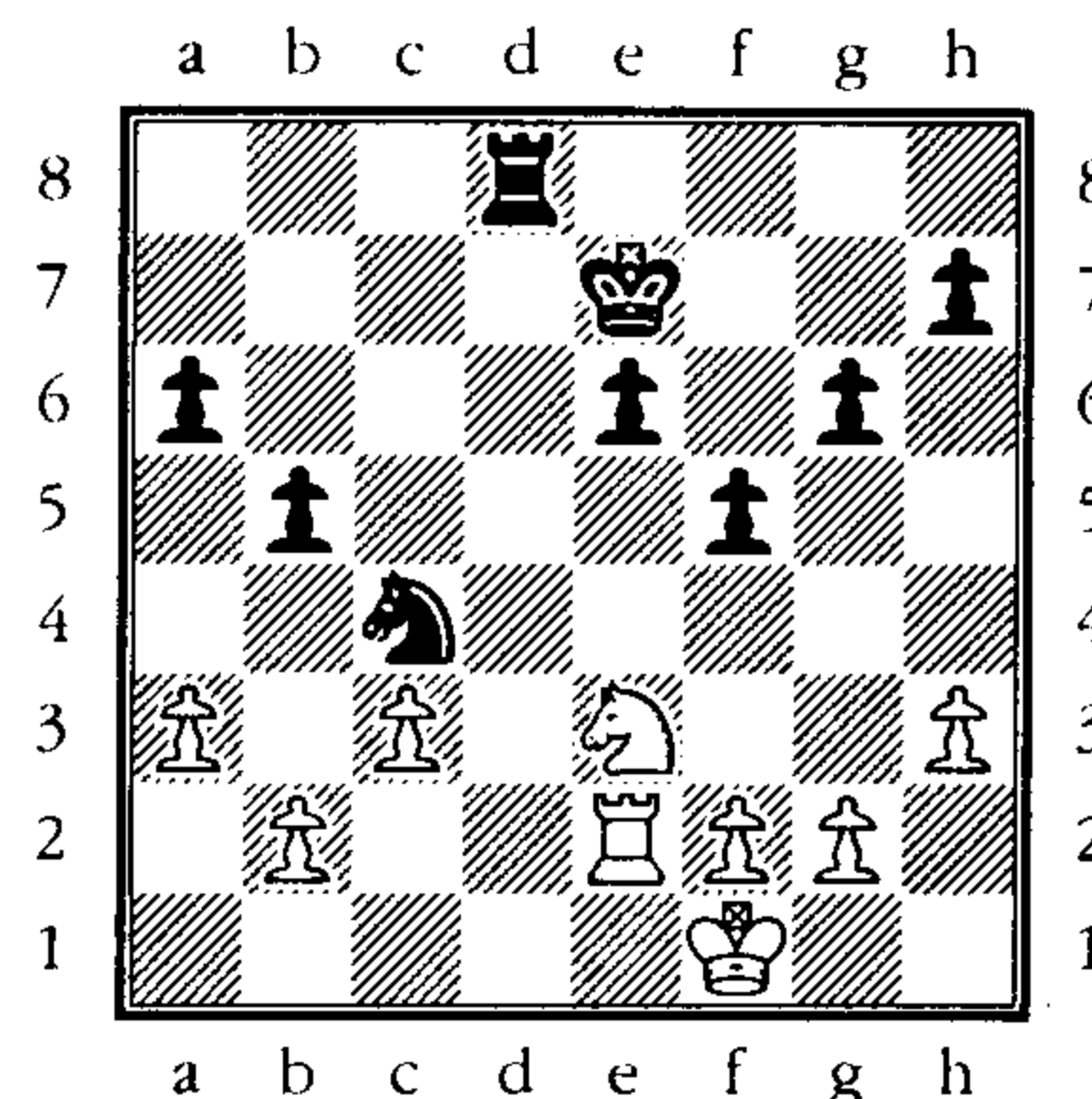
White has little choice but to exchange as surrendering the 'e'-pawn would just leave Black two pawns ahead with a four to two majority on the kingside.

33...bxc5 34 ♕f4 ♕d7 35 ♕e4 f5+ 0-1

White resigned as Black will create a passed pawn at his leisure on the kingside and, while the white king is dealing with it, Black will just casually infiltrate via d5 or b5 to the queenside. Once he takes the 'b'-pawn, his 'c'-pawn is only four squares from queening. This might seem trivial but I've seen a lot of seasoned players make hard work of such positions. To finish this section

let us look at how one player, through excellent judgement, found a way of winning what looked like a level ending:

White: Duncan Grossett
Black: Paul Helbig
Hanham Open 1997



White now played:

31 ♕xc4?

31 ♕e1 should be enough to hold the balance. Now Black plays with great precision.

31...♖d1+! 32 ♖e1 ♖xe1+ 33 ♕xe1 bxc4

Black has calculated that the king and pawn ending is winning for him.

34 f4

A better attempt was 34 ♕d2 but after 34...e5 35 ♕c2 ♕d6 36 b4 cxb3+ 37 ♕xb3 ♕c5 White is soon going to run out of moves, e.g. 38 h4 e4 39 g3 ♕b5!, just waiting for White to give ground after 40 a4 ♕c5 41 ♕c2 ♕c4, and the black king will penetrate.

34...e5! 35 fxe5 ♕e6 36 ♕e2 ♕xe5

The real difference between the two sides' pawn majorities is that White's queenside is immobile and so Black is effectively a pawn up.

37 ♕e3 f4+ 38 ♕f3 ♕f5 39 h4 h6 40 g3 g5

If White attempts to seal off the kingside with 41 g4+ and 42 h5 his king will be tied down to stopping the 'f'-pawn, whereas the black king can invade via e4 or, if necessary, even via the 'a'-file to b3, where it will mop up White's queenside pawns.

41 hxg5 hxg5 42 gxf4 gxf4 0-1

White resigns rather than face 43 ♕f2 ♕e4 44 ♕e2 f3+ 45 ♕f2 (45 ♕d2 ♕f4 46 ♕e1 ♕g3 47 ♕f1 f2) 45...♕f4 46 ♕e1 ♕e3 47 ♕f1 f2 48 a4 a5 49 ♕g2 ♕e2 when the 'f'-pawn queens.

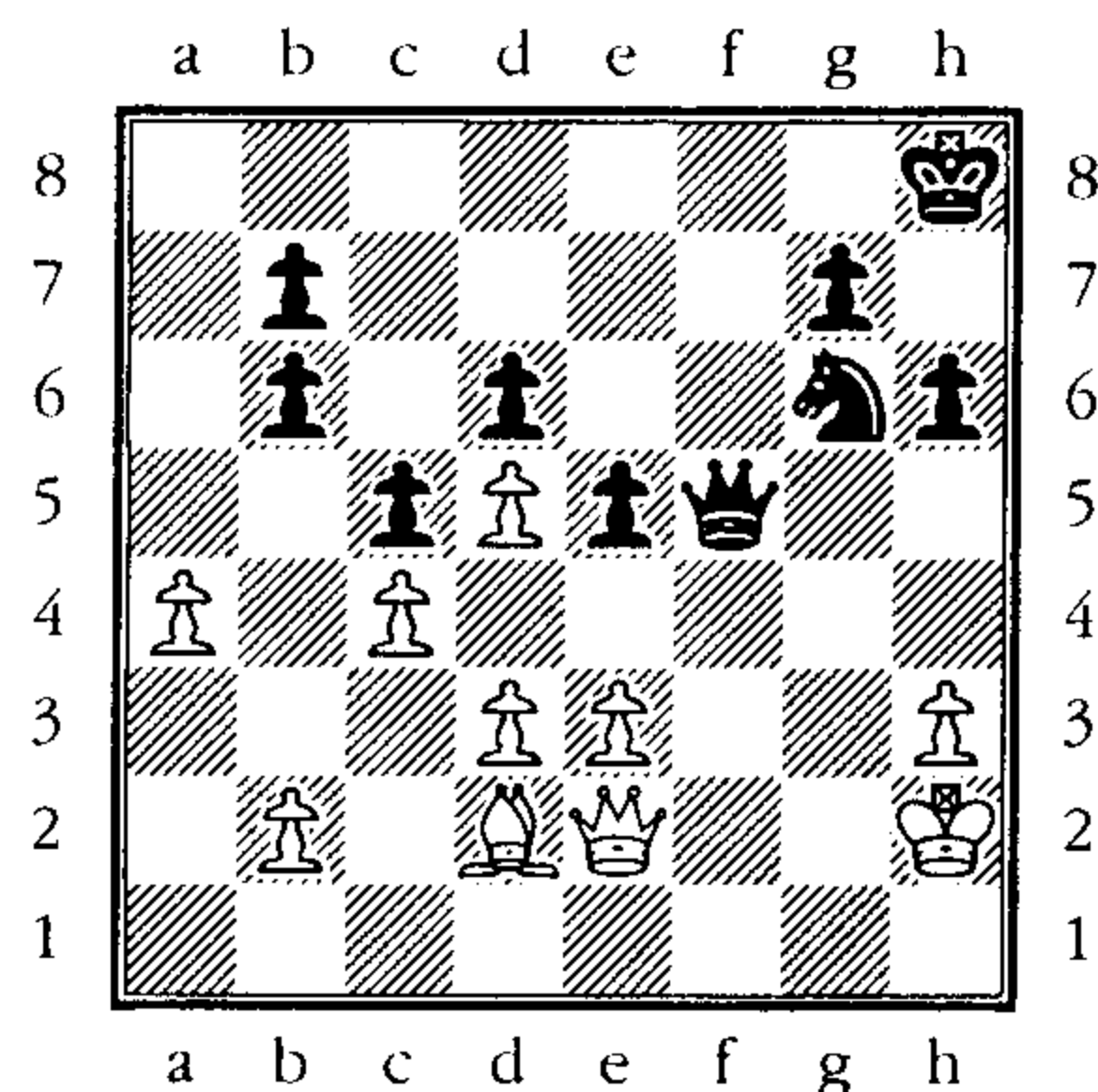
14) Endgame —forming a plan

'A bad plan is better than no plan at all'—is a statement that some of you may disagree with and I suppose, to an extent, it would all depend on how bad the plan you chose was! However, the principle is correct. For example, if you were in an ending with rook and two connected pawns each, logically you should plan either to play moves that promote the advance of your pawns with the greatest speed towards the 8th rank or find a way to slow down or stop your opponent's pawns doing the same. I have deliberately put one piece of faulty logic in that last statement, I wonder if you spotted it?—If you play moves that only slow down your opponent's pawns, they are still advancing whereas yours apparently are not moving! Therefore it is

only useful to slow down your opponent's pawns if yours are safely advancing at a greater pace than his. In forming plans we should look at exploiting or creating weaknesses, particularly in our opponent's pawn structure, safeguarding our own weaknesses and using our assets—such as a pawn majority, better pieces or more active king—to their greatest advantage. With our first example it is not so much a case of a good versus bad piece but more of a very good piece against an average one! It comes from the game that gave Vasily Ivanchuk a 'shock' match victory over Vishy Anand.

White: Vishy Anand
Black: Vasily Ivanchuk
 FIDE World Championship,
 Moscow 2001

We join the position after White has just played 35 ♖d1-e2



Let's take stock of the position: White's king is a little open but it will be hard to immediately and directly exploit this. Black has too many pawns on dark squares and must be careful not to go into a minor piece ending where White's bishop could get to d8 or he could

play a4-a5 and after bxa5 play ♗xa5-c7. However, with careful play Black's minor piece will dominate the ending!

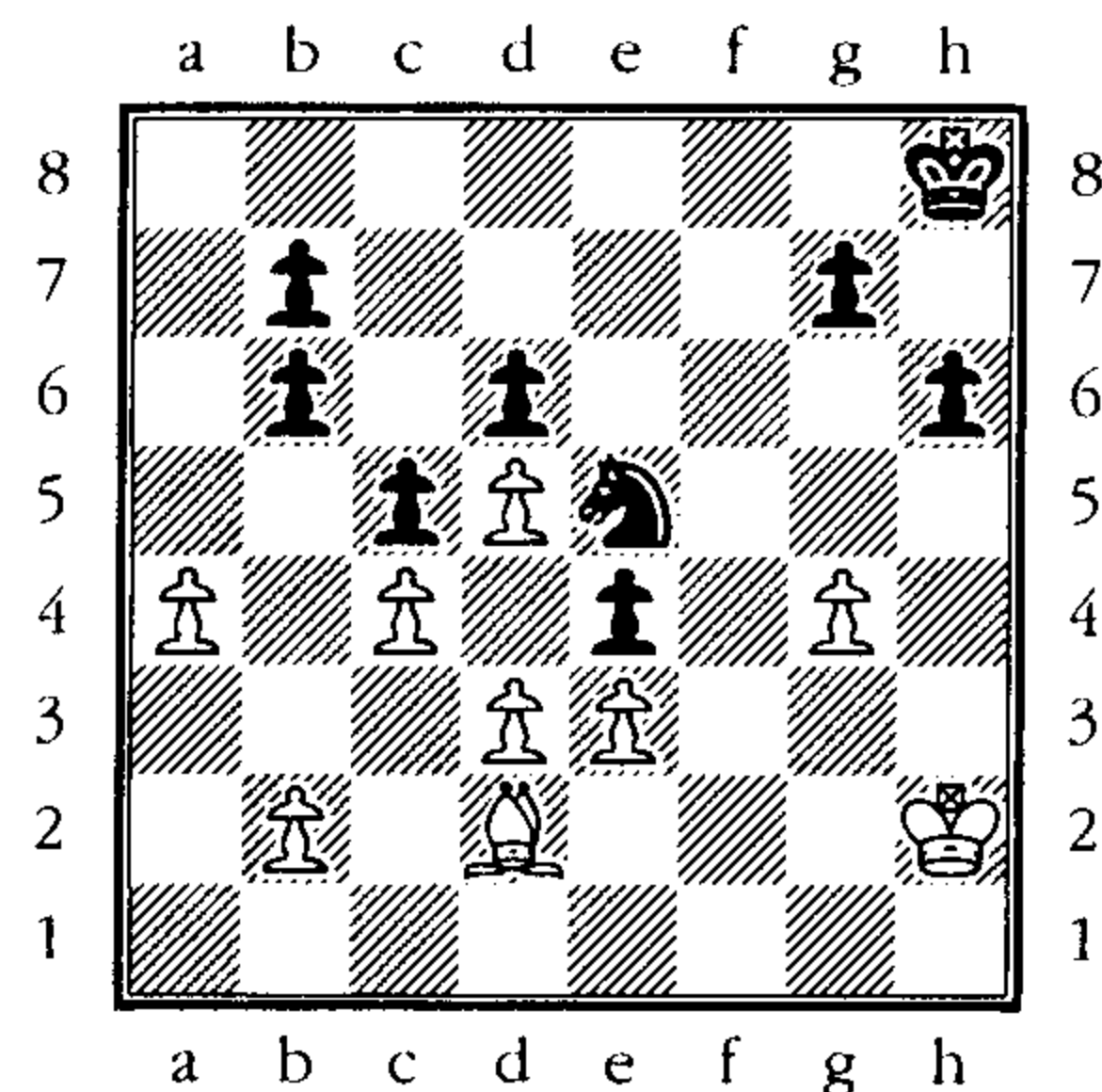
35...e4!

Not only removing a pawn from a dark square but providing a square for his knight on e5 from where it will cover the f3 square. The knight might then take up an outpost on this square and join in an attack against the white king. Moreover the pawn on c4 could become weak.

36 ♜g4

Alternatives were also unattractive but the minor piece ending proves to be very strong for Black.

36...♜xg4 37 hxg4 ♘e5!



Stronger than the immediate capture on d3 as 38 dxe4?? can be met by 38...♘f3+ winning the bishop on d2.

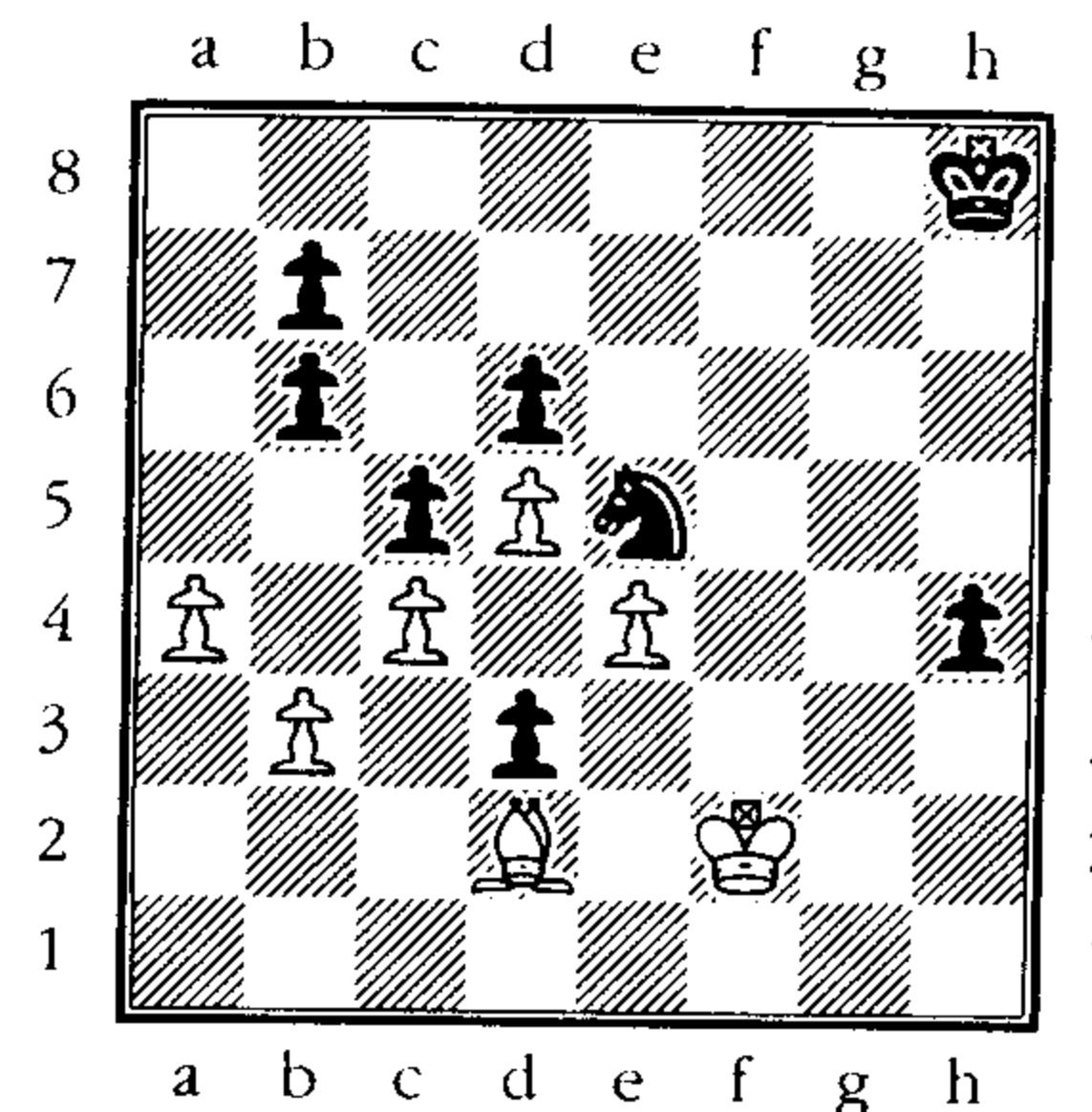
38 ♔g3 exd3

38...♘d3, while leaving Black a pawn to the good, would have enabled White to go solid with 39 b3, leaving Black with some work still to do.

39 b3 g6!

Black intends to create a second passed pawn.

40 e4 h5 41 gxh5 gxh5 42 ♔f2 h4 0-1



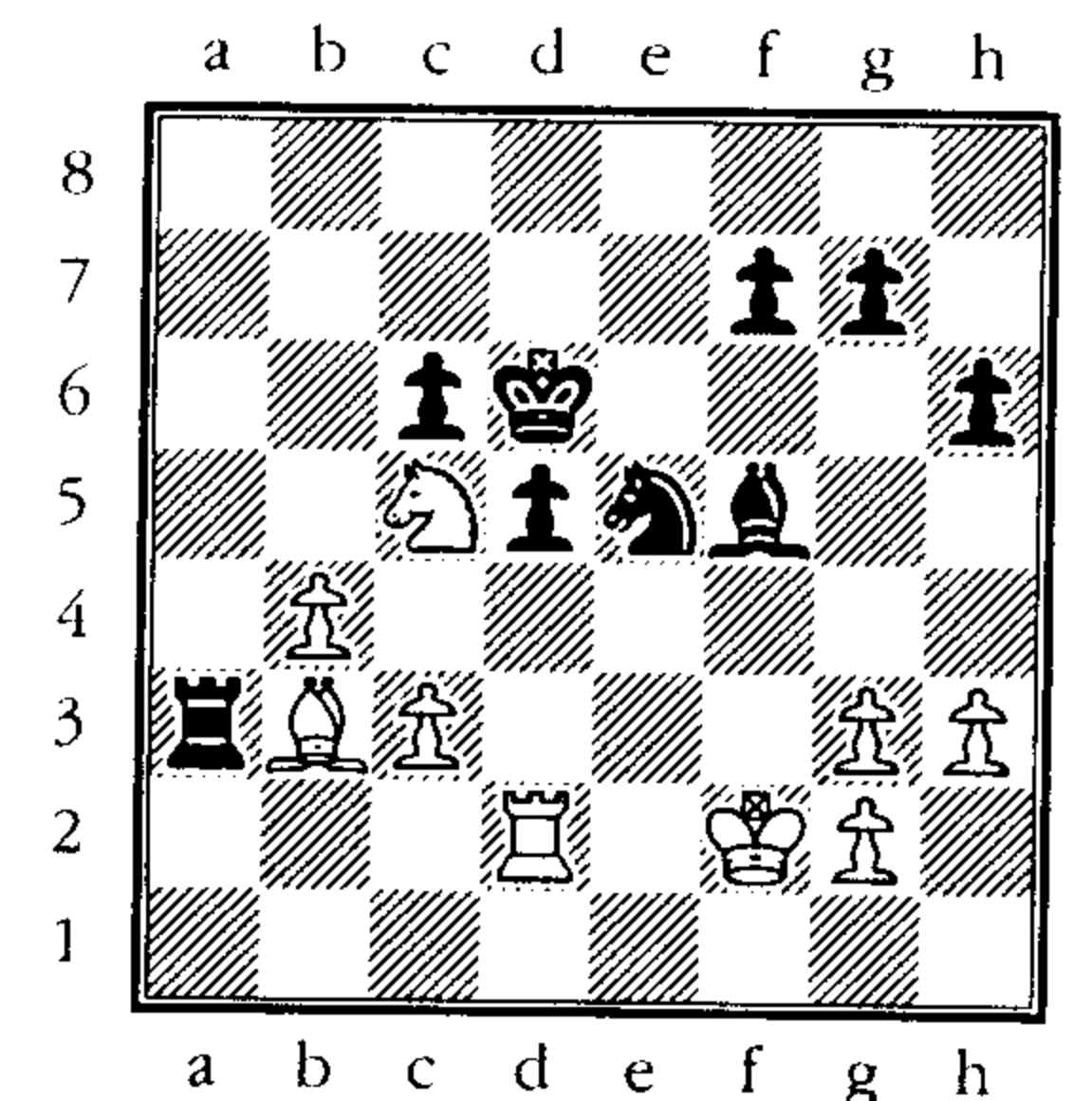
White resigned as he did not want to wait and see 43 ♔c3 h3 44 ♔g3 h2 45 ♔xh2 (45 ♔g2 ♔h7 46 ♔h1 ♘f3) 45...d2 46 ♔xd2 ♘f3+.

15) Too many choices and missing tricks

Often strong players win games they shouldn't, particularly in the endgame phase. The reason for this is quite simple—the weaker player considers the position as trivially drawn and perhaps even offers a draw. When refused it makes him feel a little insulted and he tries to punish his opponent for his audacity, trying to prove how he is in fact obviously 'better' (why then, if he is better, is he offering a draw!?) and then fails to 'work' at the position. For some reason these players believe that their position should play itself and are sometimes even 'annoyed' at their opponents for wanting to carry on. All this leads to the perfect 'stomping ground' for the stronger player to

come up with a 'trick' into which, it seems more often than not, their unsuspecting opponent will fall headlong. Another problem can stem from a player having too many choices and, after eliminating some of the options, for whatever reason two or three still seem to be as good as each other. This is where a strong player comes into his own because he will choose the move that fits best into his 'plan', whether this meets a short-term or long-term objective. Our first example of this comes from one of my own games in a local league Open tournament.

White: Duncan Grossett
Black: Chris Baker
 Bristol League Open 1997



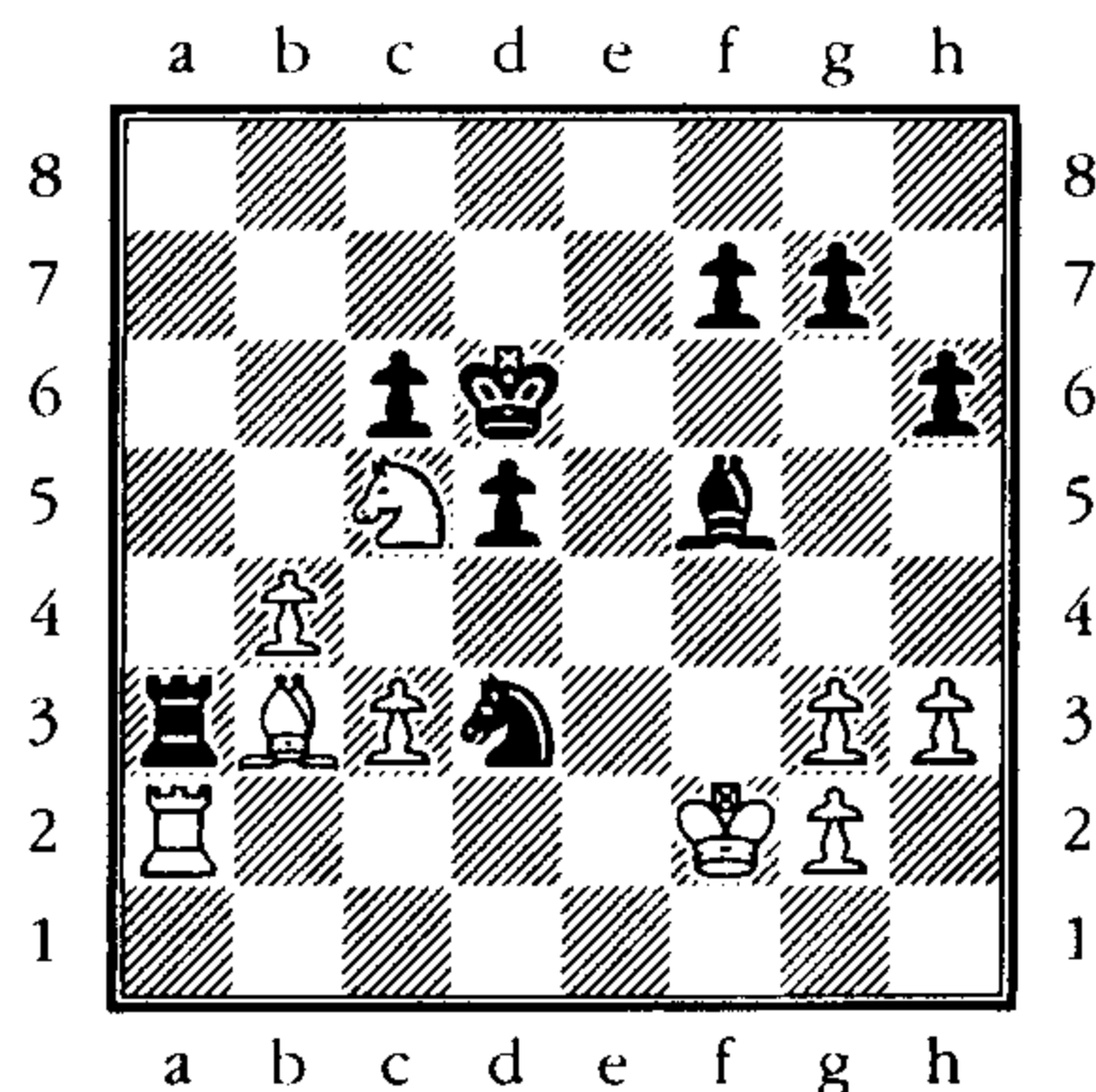
We start at a position after Black has just played 32...♜a8-a3. Here Black can claim a 'minimal' advantage due to the superior position of his rook but with careful play White is still well in the game. Unfortunately he tried to solve all of his problems in one go when instead he should have been suspicious of Black's last move, ...♜a8-a3. I would hardly have been likely to 'offer' the exchange of rooks without having something up my sleeve.

Part of White's 'psychological problem' could have stemmed from the fact that he was better earlier in the game and was probably 'kicking himself' for not having got more than he had from the position. There is an important lesson here and one that is hard to learn: no matter what has already happened in a game you must adjust to the situation at hand—the time for repercussions on earlier positions is *after* the game.

33 ♖a2?

33 ♖e3 would have been consistent with the requirements of the position.

33...♗d3+!



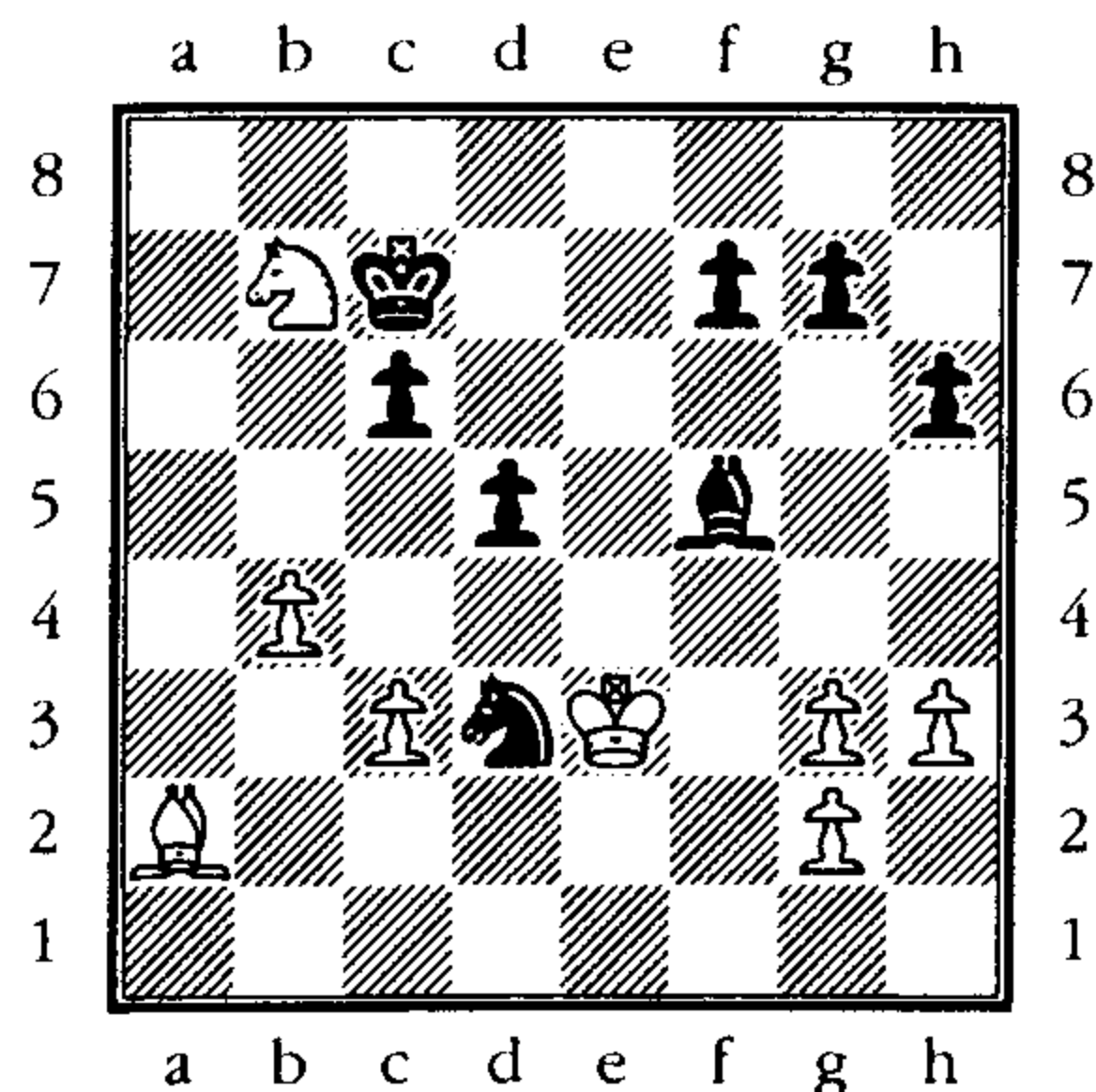
34 ♖e3

34 ♗xd3 ♖xb3 35 ♗c5 ♖xc3 would offer Black real chances of converting the ending for the full point.

34...♖xa2 35 ♗b7+?

35 ♖xa2 ♗xc5 36 bxc5+ ♖xc5 leaves White very much with an uphill struggle to save the ending but would have been relatively best.

35...♖c7 36 ♖xa2

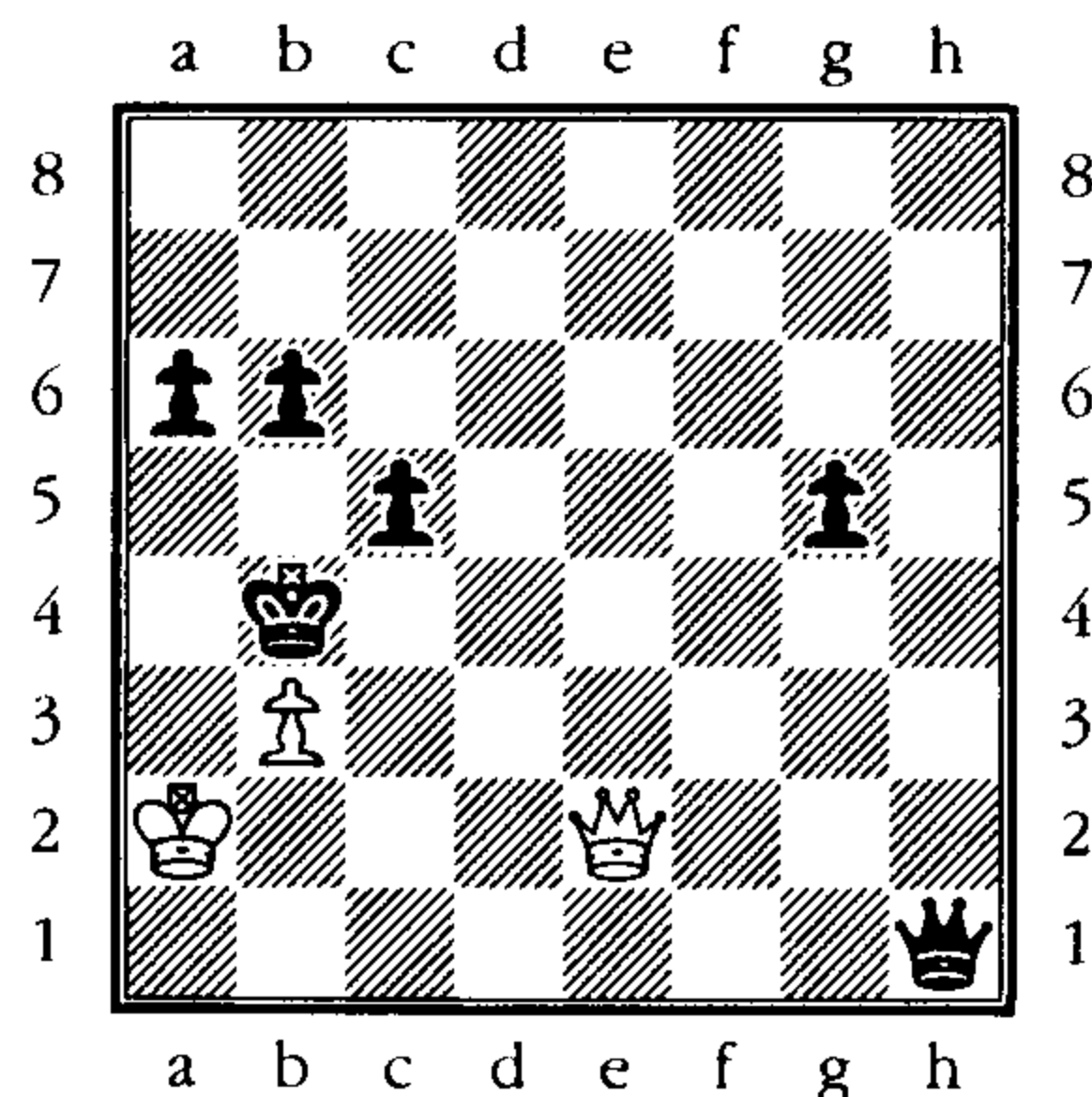


36...♗c1 0-1

Black will emerge a piece ahead. Not as strong would have been 36...♖xb7? 37 ♖b1 ♗xb4 38 ♖xf5 which still offers White some hope.

Now look at the following position and decide, with Black to move, what you would play:

*White: Eric Prie
Black: Georgy Giorgadze
Andorra 1997*



Black is three pawns ahead but, as he has no useful checks nor any clear way of forcing the exchange of queens, he must form a plan.

Several moves spring to mind, the consequences of which may not be obvious for several moves. It is exactly at this point, with too many viable-looking moves available, that you can miss your opponent's tricks:

1...♗d5?

The main alternatives were:

a) 1...♗c1 2 ♗e4+ ♖c3 (2...c4 3 ♗e7+ ♖a5 4 ♗e5+ b5 5 ♗c7+ ♖b4 6 ♗d6+ ♖c3 7 ♗e5+ and Black cannot avoid the checks) 3 ♗e5+ ♖d3 (3...♖c2 4 ♗f5+ ♖d1 5 ♗g4+ ♖e1 6 ♗g1+ ♖d2 7 ♗xg5+ with a draw) 4 ♗d5+ ♖e2 5 ♗g2+

b) 1...♗h4! 2 ♗d2+ ♖b5 3 ♗d7+ ♖a5 4 ♗d2+ ♗b4 5 ♗xg5 ♗d4 6 ♗e7 c4 (after 6...♗d2+ 7 ♖a3 ♗c3 8 ♖a2 ♗c2+ 9 ♖a3 ♗b1 10 ♗e5 with the 'c'-pawn pinned Black cannot make further progress) 7 ♗a3+ ♖b5 8 ♗a4+ ♖c5 9 ♗a3+ (9 b4+ ♖d6 10 ♗xa6 ♗d2+ 11 ♖a3 ♗c3+ 12 ♖a2 ♗xb4 winning) 9...♖c6! (9...♖d5 10 ♗xa6 ♗d2+ 11 ♖a3 ♗c1+ 12 ♖b4 ♗e1+ 13 ♖b5 ♗e8+ 14 ♖b4 ♗e7+ 15 ♖a4 ♗d7+ 16 ♖a3 and Black has problems making progress) 10 ♗a4+ (10 ♗xa6 ♗d2+ 11 ♖a3 ♗c1+ 12 ♖b4 ♗e1+ wins as Black can exchange queens) 10...♖b7 11 bxc4 b5 winning.

2 ♗e1+ ♖b5 3 ♗e8+ ♖b4 4 ♗e1+ ♖b5 5 ♗e8+ ♗c6 6 ♗e2+ c4 7 ♗e5+ ♖b4

7...♗c5 8 ♗e8+ ♖b4 (8...♗c6 9 ♗e5+ with a repetition) 9 ♗e1+ c3?? (9...♖b5 10 ♗e5+ with a draw) 10 ♗e4+ ♖b5 11 ♗a4 mate.

8 ♗e7+ ♖a5

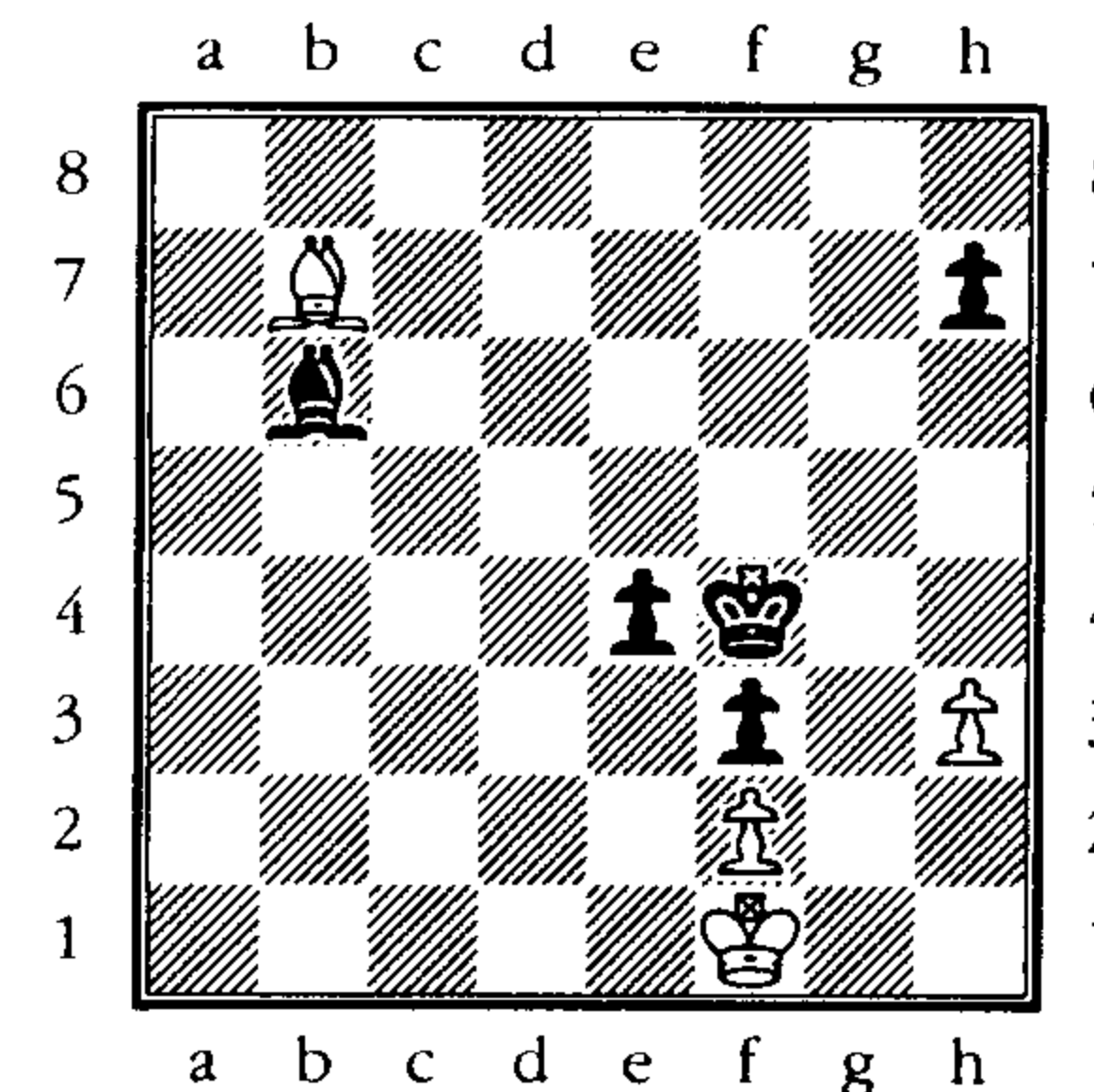
With 8...♗c5 or 8...♖c3 Black can still draw.

9 ♖a3 1-0

After 9...♗c5+ 10 b4+ wins, while if 9...b5 10 ♗d8+ ♗b6 11 b4 is mate. Black's problem was too many choices with no 'obvious' route to success, followed by missing 'the trick' (9 ♖a3) when he couldn't adjust to accepting the fact that the position had become drawn.

The next position seems like it should be quite easy to handle but in fact it is very complex:

*White: Corina Peptan
Black: Elena Danielian
Pula 1997*



With Black's bishop being the wrong colour for a pawn promotion on h1, winning chances appear to be slim. But, in fact, because of the re-occurring theme of sacrificing a piece on f2, White has to be extremely careful.

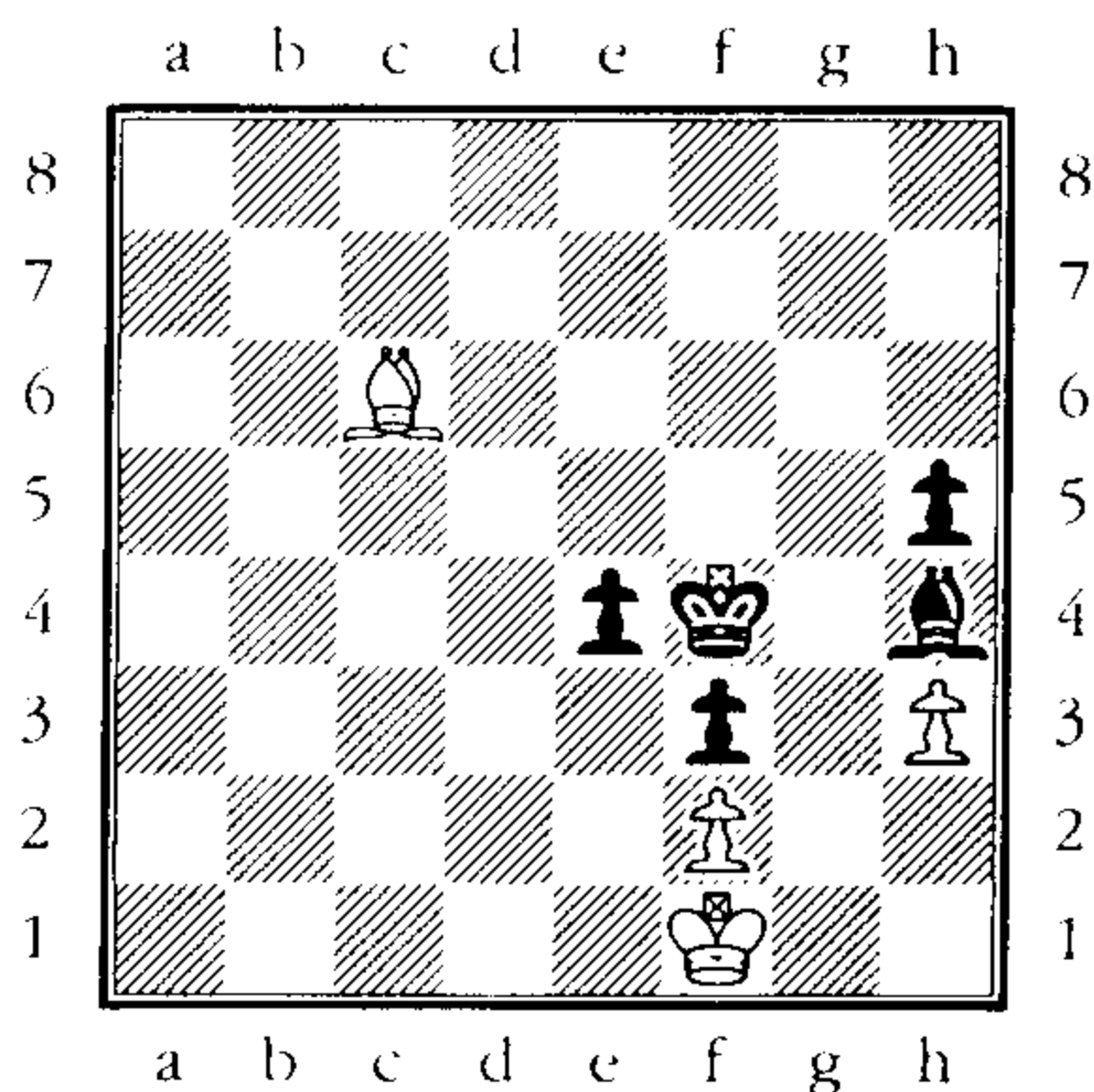
1 ♖c6

Best is 1 h4! with the idea of h4-h5 drawing, then 1...h5 (1...♖xf2 2 ♖xf2 e3+ 3 ♖f1 draws) 2 ♖c6 ♖d8 3 ♖e8 ♖xh4 (3...♖g4 4 ♖c6 by transferring the bishop to threaten Black's 'e'-pawn instead

White can hold the position) 4 ♖xh5 ♖xf2 5 ♖xf2 (5 ♖xf3! also draws) 5...e3+ 6 ♖e1 (6 ♖f1? ♖g3! wins) 6...♖g3 7 ♖xf3 and White draws as he has the opposition after 7...♖xf3 8 ♖f1.

1...h6

After 1...♖d8 2 ♖d5 ♖h4 3 ♖c6 h5



...and now we have the following possibilities:

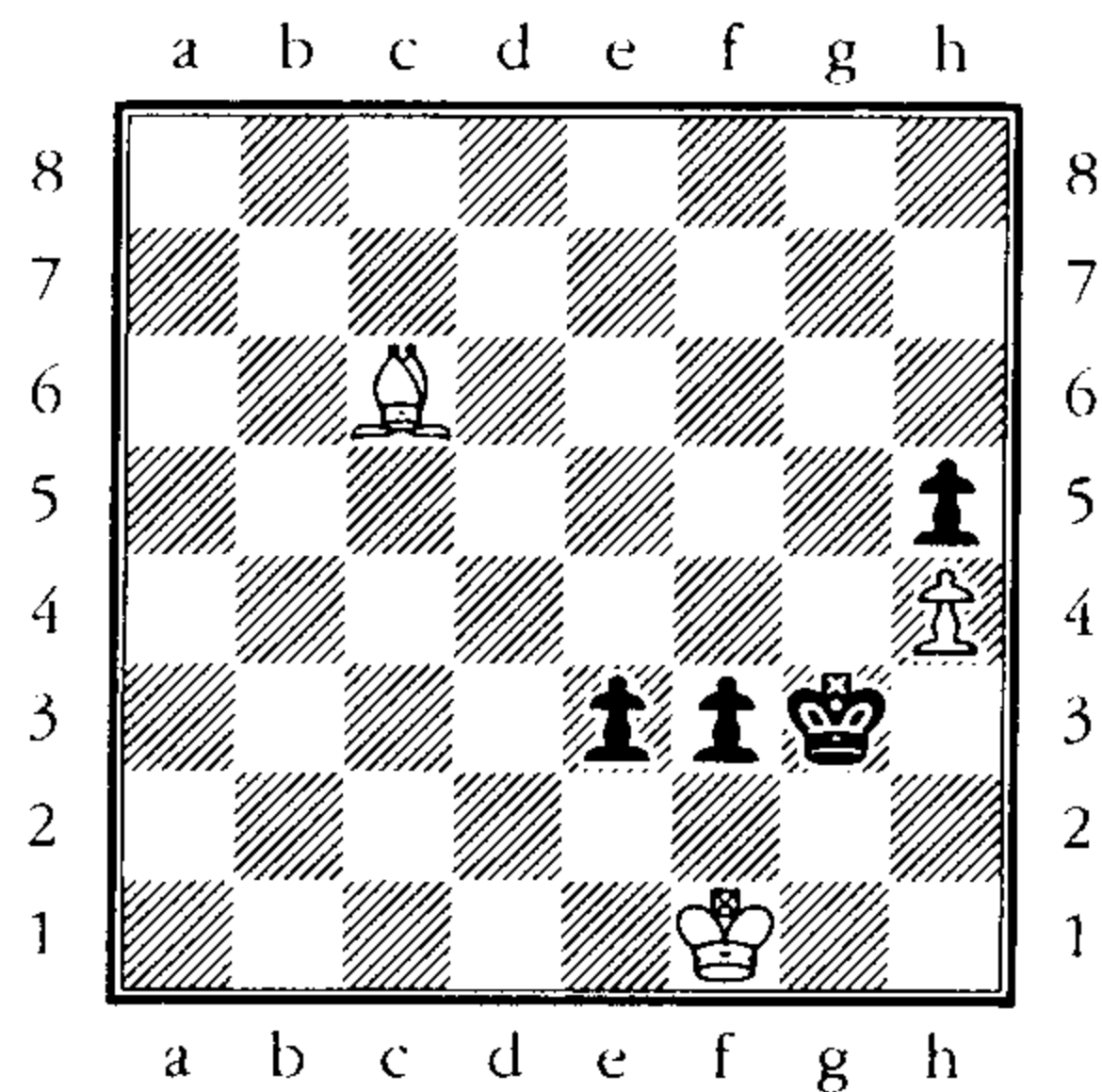
a) 4 ♖e8 ♖xf2! 5 ♖xf2 (5 ♖xh5 e3 6 ♖e8 ♖h4 7 ♖b5 ♖e4 and Black wins by putting his king on d2 prior to playing ...e2+ and White cannot take his bishop off the f1-a6 diagonal) 5...e3+ (5...h4! 6 ♖a4 e3+ 7 ♖f1 ♖g3 8 ♖d1 drawing) 6 ♖f1 (6 ♖g1 ♖g3 7 ♖f1 e2+ 8 ♖e1 f2+ 9 ♖xe2 ♖g2 and Black wins) 6...♖g3! 7 ♖c6 (7 ♖xh5 e2+ 8 ♖e1 f2+ 9 ♖xe2 ♖g2 winning) 7...h4 8 ♖d5 f2 9 ♖c6 (9 ♖e6 e2+ 10 ♖xe2 ♖g2 wins) 9...♖xh3 and Black's pawns will prove decisive.

b) 4 ♖a4 ♖xf2! 5 ♖xf2 e3+ 6 ♖f1 (after 6 ♖e1 ♖g3 7 ♖c6 h4 8 ♖f1 f2! and 6 ♖g1 ♖g3 7 ♖f1 e2+ 8 ♖e1 f2+! Black wins) 6...♖g3 7 ♖d1 h4 White is in zugzwang.

c) 4 ♖b7 ♖xf2! 5 ♖xf2 e3+ 6 ♖e1 (6 ♖f1 h4!) 6...h4 7 ♖a6 ♖g3 8 ♖f1 ♖h2! 9 ♖d1 f2 10 ♖e2 ♖g1 and White has no moves.

d) 4 ♖d5! ♖xf2 5 ♖xf2 e3+ 6 ♖f1 (6 ♖e1 h4! wins for Black as does 7 ♖g1 ♖g3 8 ♖f1 h4!) 6...h4 (6...♖g3 7 h4 draws as, after capturing on h4 at some point, the black king will, critically, be on h4 rather than h3) 7 ♖b3 ♖g3 8 ♖d1 with a draw.

2 ♖d5 ♖xf2 3 ♖xf2 e3+ 4 ♖f1 ♖g3 5 h4 h5 6 ♖c6



6...f2

After 6...e2+ 7 ♖e1 ♖g2 8 ♖d5 draws.

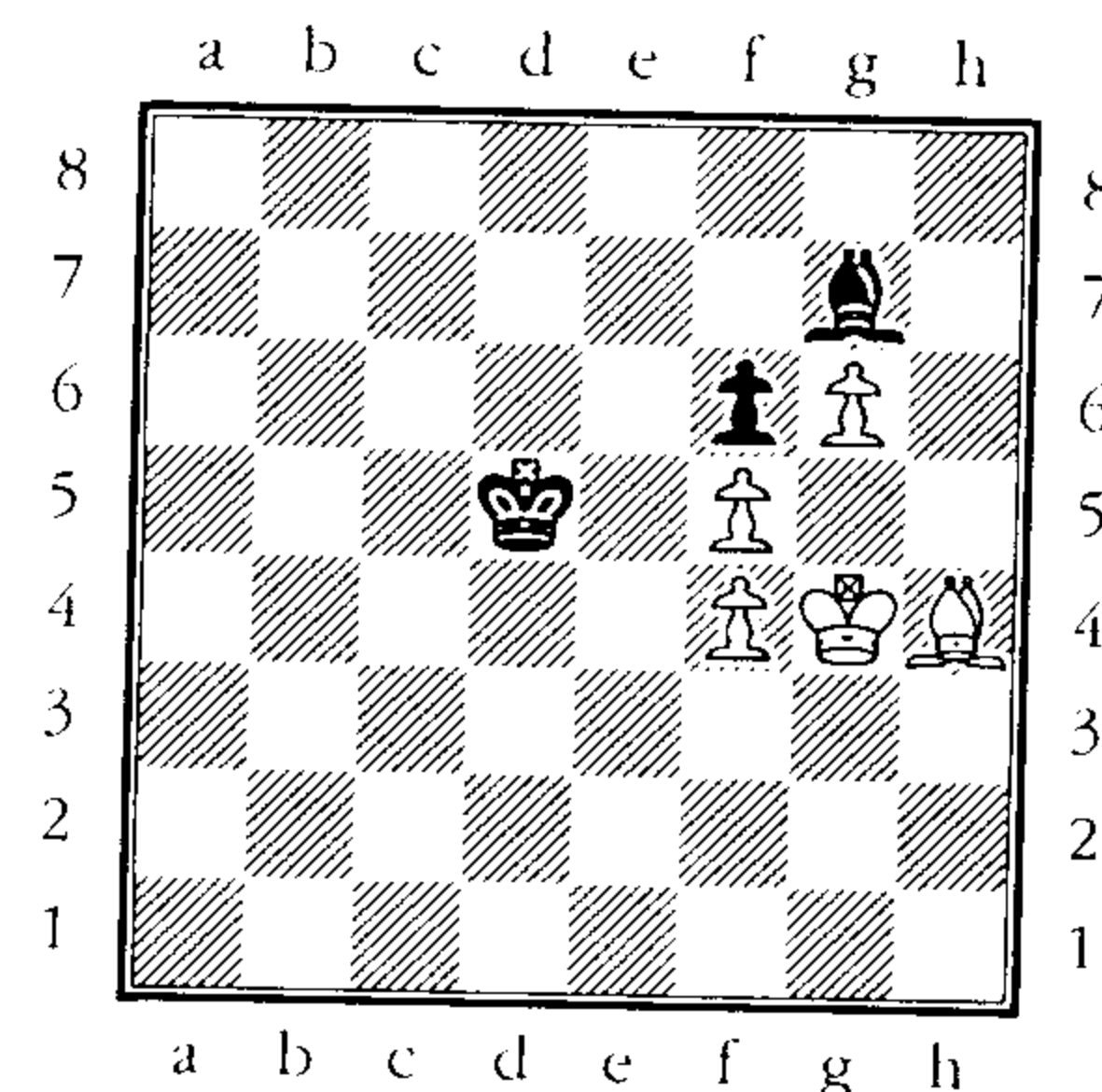
7 ♖b5 ♖xh4 8 ♖g2 ♖g4 9 ♖e2+ ♖h4 10 ♖f1 ♖g4 11 ♖e2+ ♖g5 12 ♖f3 ♖h4 13 ♖g2 1/2-1/2

13 ♖xe3 ♖g3 14 ♖f1 also draws. From a practical point of view Black would have been better trying 1...♖d8 as it would have given White more chances of going wrong.

Our final example from this section is very instructive and shows how there are resources in the most

unlikely of situations. Yet again, from the original position the person to play has choices and gets it wrong!

White: C.Hertan
Black: W.Kelleher
USA 1997



1...♖e4??

The alternatives were:

a) 1...♖d4?? 2 ♖g5 ♖e4 3 ♖h5 ♖xf5 4 ♖h6 ♖h8 5 ♖f8 ♖xf4 6 ♖h6! f5 7 ♖g7 ♖xg7+ 8 ♖xg7 ♖e3 9 ♖h7 f4 10 g7 f3 11 g8=♖ f2 12 ♖c4 and White wins as he can get his queen to f1;

b) 1...♖d6! 2 ♖h5 ♖e7 3 ♖g5 fxg5 4 fxg5 ♖f8 5 f6 ♖g8 6 ♖g4 ♖f8 7 ♖f5 ♖g7 8 ♖e6 ♖f8 9 ♖d7 ♖g7 10 ♖e7 ♖f8+ 11 ♖e8 ♖g7 (11...♖a3 12 g7 ♖b4 and White cannot make further progress) 12 f7+ ♖h8 13 ♖e7 ♖f8+! draws as 14 ♖xf8 is stalemate.

2 ♖g5 ♖d5

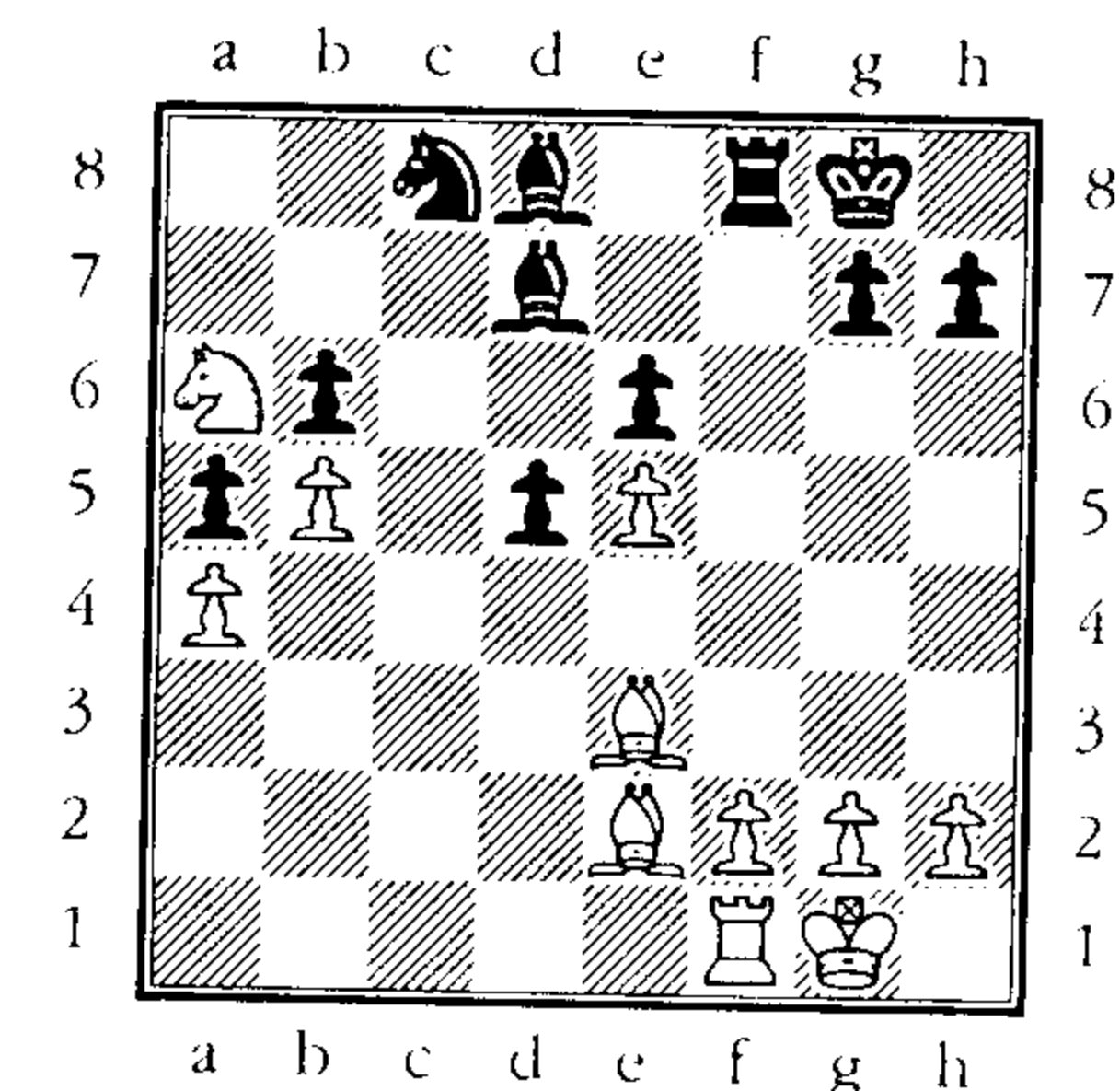
2...fxg5 loses as after 3 ♖xg5 Black cannot hold the pawns.

3 ♖h5 ♖e4 4 ♖h6 1-0

16) Understanding 'Good and Bad Pieces'

Let's start off by asking ourselves what a good or bad piece is. In my mind a piece is worth what it is doing and/or what it might potentially do. Therefore a good piece is one that is doing a useful job, whether it is initiating or assisting in an attack, causing your opponent a problem or just carrying out vital defence. On the other hand, a bad piece is one that exerts little influence on the game, has limited scope and has no prospects of improving itself to any great degree. However sometimes a piece can revert from one type to another, usually when there has been a major change in the position, for example an alteration in the pawn structure. Another example would be when a king was under great pressure from an opponent's attack but, because of exchanges, became well placed for the ending. When the pawn structure is static, pieces are more likely to remain bad throughout the game. Our first example shows that having inferior pieces puts a player under a lot of pressure:

White: John Richards
Black: Ian White
Bristol League Open 1997



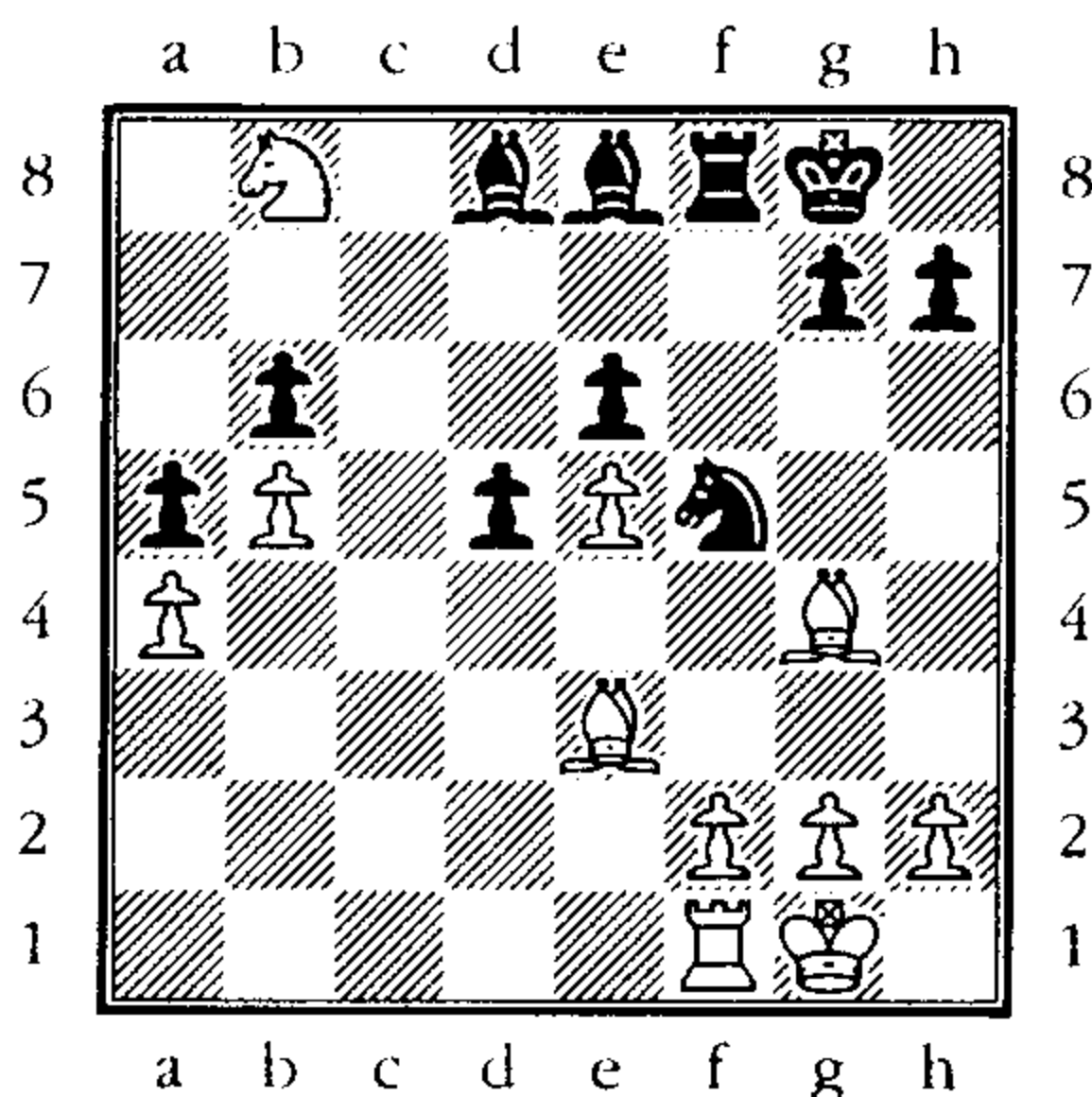
Assessing the position in the diagram, we can say that, although Black has a solid position and a protected passed pawn, he has the inferior game due to the passivity of his minor pieces (compare, for instance each of White's bishops with their counterparts) and his lack of space. Also White can obtain control of the only open file.

28...♗e7

After 28...♞f5 29 ♖b8 ♗e8 30 f4 ♞f8 (what else?) 31 ♗g4 ♖f7 32 f5! White's position is dominating.

29 ♖b8 ♗e8 30 ♗g4 ♖f5

Now White has to make a major decision as he has at least three viable choices.



31 ♗xf5

Also possible are:

a) 31 ♖c6 ♗xc6 32 bxc6 ♖f7 33 ♗xf5 exf5 34 f4 ♖e6 35 ♞b1 ♗c7 36 ♖f2 (the 'b'-pawn is at least temporarily immune, i.e. 36 ♗xb6?? ♞b8 37 ♗xc7 ♞xb1+ 38 ♖f2 ♞b4) 36...♞c8 37 ♞b5 ♞b8 (37...♗d8? 38 ♗xb6 and Black cannot take on c6 as his bishop

would be 'hanging' on d8) 38 ♖f3 and although White has a strong position he must still find a way through.

b) 31 ♞c1! (to my mind, not only the most natural move, putting the rook on the open file, but also the strongest) 31...♗xe3 (31...d4!? 32 ♗xf5 dxe3 33 ♗xe6+ ♖h8 34 fxe3 ♗g5 35 ♞c3 ♗xb5! 36 axb5 ♞xb8 37 ♖f2 and despite bishops of opposite colour White's position is strong—his king is better placed, the passed pawn on e5 is more dangerous than its counterpart on a5 and Black's pawn on b6 could become a source of weakness) 32 ♗xe6+ ♗f7 33 ♗xf7+ ♖xf7 34 fxe3 ♞e8 35 ♖c6 and Black has problems, e.g. 35...♗c7 36 ♖xa5 ♗xe5 37 ♖c6 ♗f6 38 ♖f2 ♞a8 39 a5! bxa5 40 b6 and Black will have to pay a heavy price to stop the 'b'-pawn.

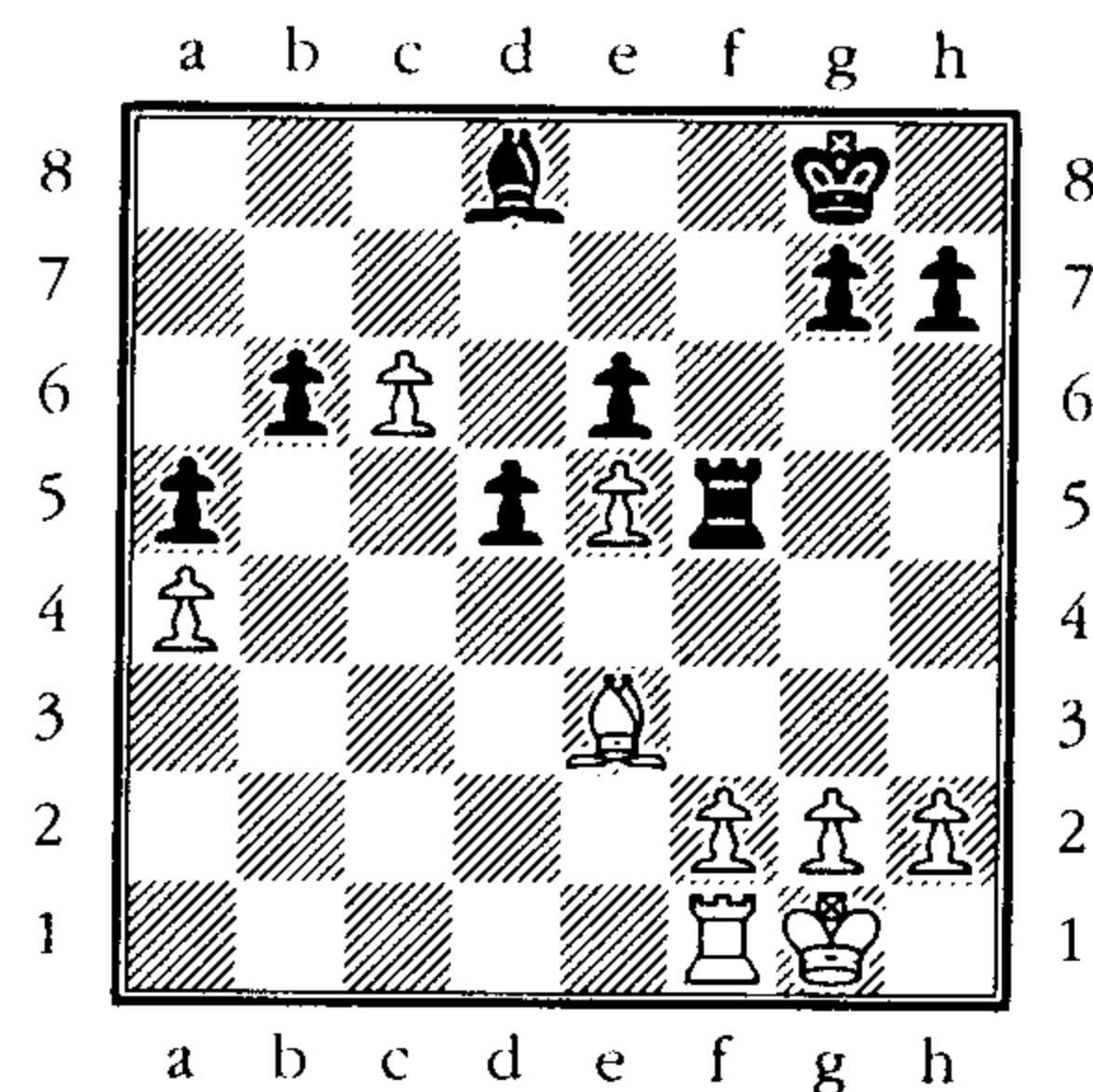
31...♞xf5

The problem with taking back with the 'e'-pawn is that Black not only creates a central passed pawn for his opponent but also isolates and weakens his own on d5.

32 ♖c6!

As Black's dark-squared bishop will have problems remaining on the h4-d8 diagonal, where it stops White from playing ♖c6-e7+ and protects the pawn on b6, Black is forced to exchange on c6, not only conceding the bishop pair and giving White a passed pawn on the sixth but also leaving himself with the inferior minor piece.

32...♗xc6 33 bxc6



33...♗c7

33...♞xe5!? is not quite so ridiculous as might first appear, i.e. 34 ♗f4 (as opposed to 34 ♞c1? when Black has better chances of saving the game by 34...♞e4 35 c7 ♗xc7 36 ♞xc7 ♞xa4 as it will not be easy for White to secure the full point) 34...♞e4 35 c7 ♗xc7 36 ♗xc7 ♞xa4 37 ♗xb6 White should, with careful play, be able to win. One plan would be to put his bishop on the a1-h8 diagonal, attempt to exchange rooks on the 'a'-file, activate his king and wait for Black to run out of moves.

34 f4

34 ♞b1 is of no independent value, e.g. 34...♖f7 35 ♗xb6? (35 f4! transposes to a position very similar to the game continuation) 35...♗xb6 36 ♞xb6 ♞xe5 37 ♖f1 ♞e4 38 ♞b7+ ♖f6 39 c7 ♞c4 with a position in which Black can be no worse.

34...♞f8 35 ♞b1 ♞b8

As White was not threatening to take on b6, perhaps Black should have instead improved the position of his king with 35...♖f7.

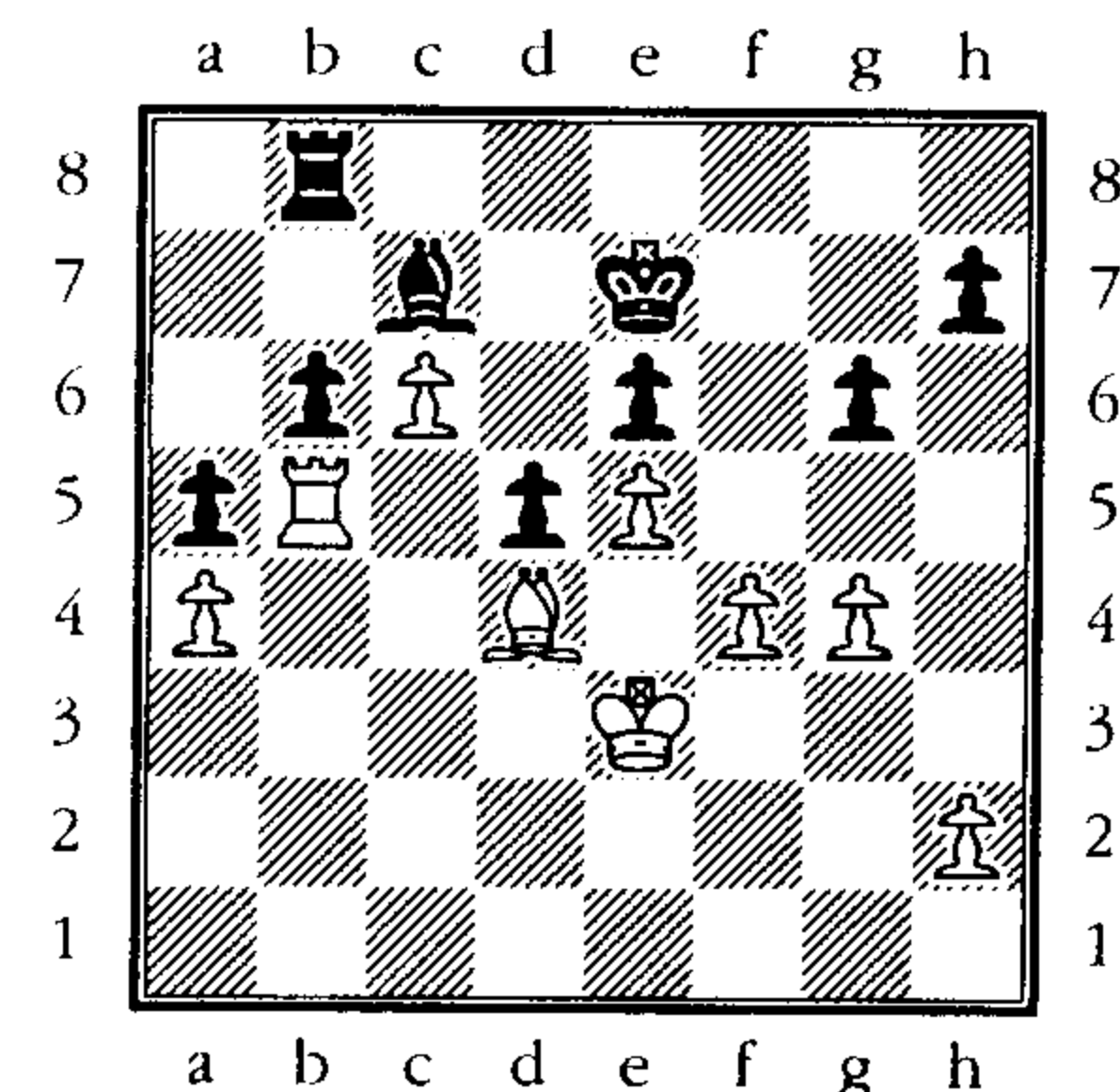
36 ♖f2 ♖f7 37 ♗d4 g6 38 g4 ♖e7 39 ♖e3 ♖e8

White's king, rook and bishop are all better placed than his opponent's—all he needs now is a plan to break through.

40 ♞b5!

Aiming to play f4-f5, creating another passed pawn, or, if Black exchanges off, winning the pawn on d5 en route to the seventh rank.

40...♖e7



41 ♗b2

Now that White's king can blockade Black's passed pawn on d5, White redeploys his bishop to the a3-f8 diagonal so that it can penetrate to d6. However, one problem is that the white pawn on c6 remains unprotected and because of this Black is not without resource. Instead 41 f5!, as a logical follow-up to his previous move, was still a viable option, e.g. 41...exf5 42 gxf5 gxf5 43 ♞xd5 ♖e6 44 ♞d7 ♗xe5 45 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 46 c7 ♞c8 47 ♞xh7 and Black will have great problems holding the ending due to White's passed 'h'-pawn.

41...♖f7 42 ♗a3 ♞d8?

Now White gets what he wants. Instead 42...♖c8! is a difficult move to break, e.g. 43 ♖b2, planning to protect the 'c'-pawn with ♖b2-c2, is the best option when White is better but still has to find a way to break through, as opposed to 43 ♔d6? ♔xd6 44 exd6 ♖xc6 when Black is well on top or 43 ♔d4? ♔b8! when the 'c'-pawn falls.

43 ♔d6! ♔xd6 44 exd6 ♖xd6 45 ♖xb6 ♖d8

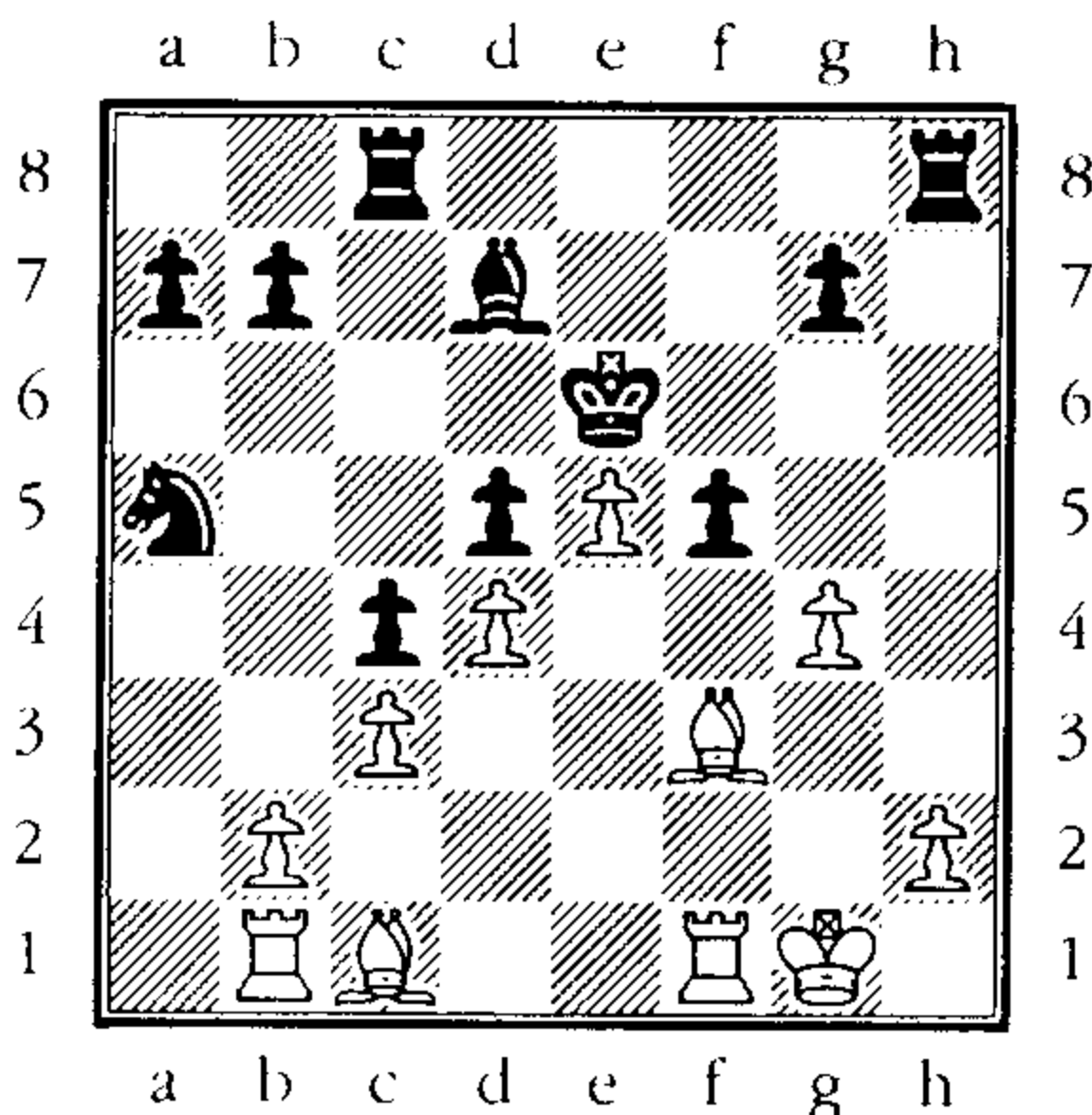
After 45...d4+ White should play 46 ♔e4! ♖d5 47 ♖b7+ ♔e8 (47...♔f6 48 c7! ♖c5 49 c8=♚! ♖xc8 50 g5 mate) 48 ♖b8+ ♔e7 (48...♖d8 49 c7!) 49 c7 winning.

46 ♖b7+ ♔e8 47 ♖xh7 ♖d6 48 ♖h8+ 1-0

Black resigns as after 48...♔e7 49 c7 ♖c6 50 c8=♚ he will have to give up his rook for the pawn.

In the next game White plays some very good moves to gain the upper hand—only to nearly 'blow it away' by choosing the wrong plan. However, parity is restored when Black misses the best defence.

White: Duncan Grossett
Black: Steve Boniface
Bristol League Open 1997



White had just played 24 g2-g4! putting Black on the spot.

24...g6

After 24...♖cf8 25 gxf5+ ♖xf5 26 ♔g4 g6 White will not only be the exchange up but can activate his dark-squared bishop with 27 ♔g5 and White should go on to win the game.

25 gxf5+ gxf5 26 ♔f4 ♖cg8+

After 26...♖h4!? 27 ♔g3 ♖g8 28 ♔f2 ♖h6 29 ♔f4 ♖h4 30 ♔e3 White is better.

27 ♔f2 ♔e8

Black would love to exchange off his light-squared bishop with ...♔e8-h5 next move, eliminating not only White's bishop pair but also his better bishop.

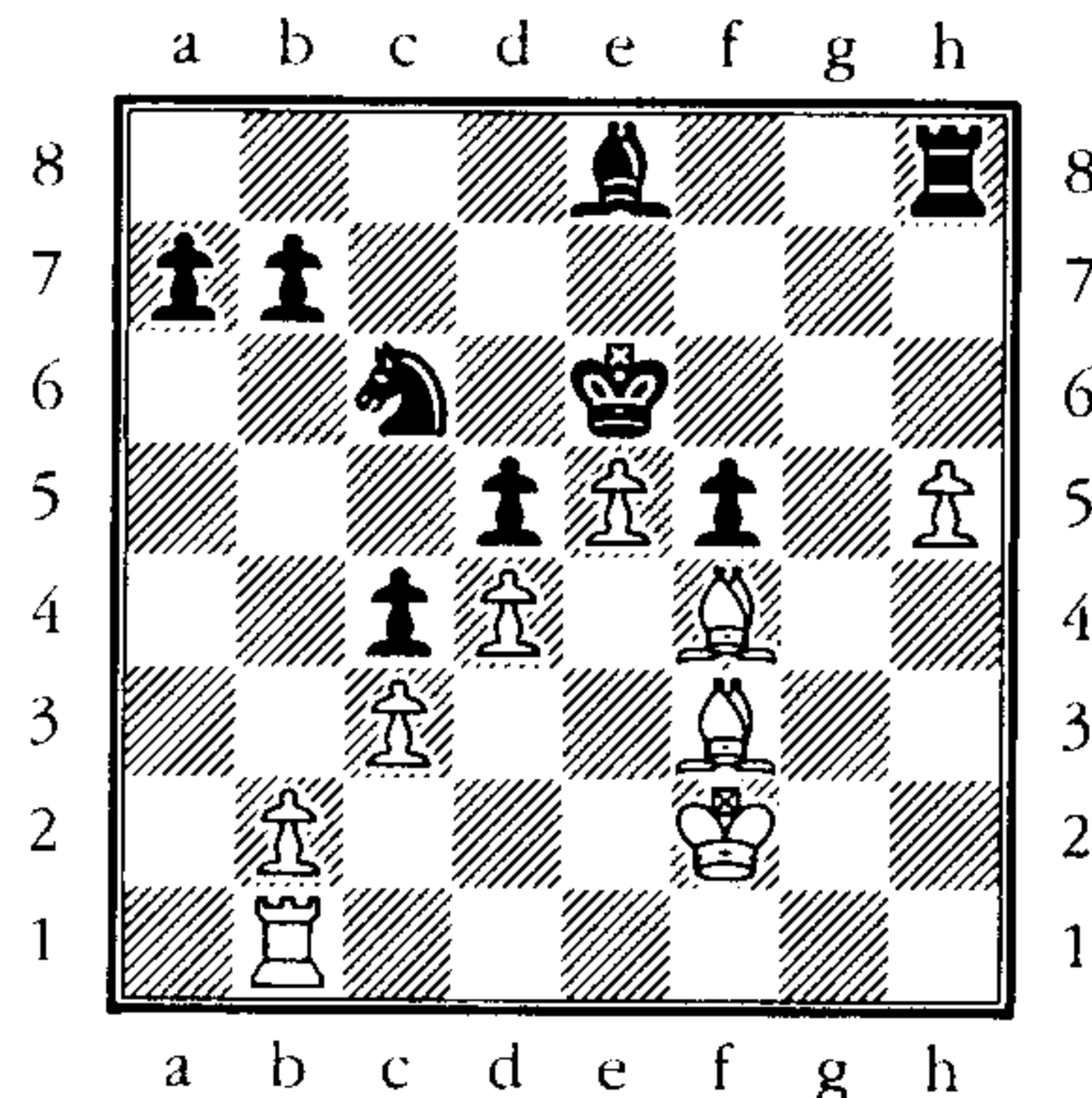
28 ♖g1 ♔c6

Playing for exchanges by 28...♖xg1 29 ♖xg1 ♔h5 comes at too high a price after 30 ♔xh5 ♖xh5 31 ♖g6+ which is very strong for White.

29 ♖xg8 ♖xg8 30 h4

Passed pawns must be pushed!

30...♖h8 31 h5!



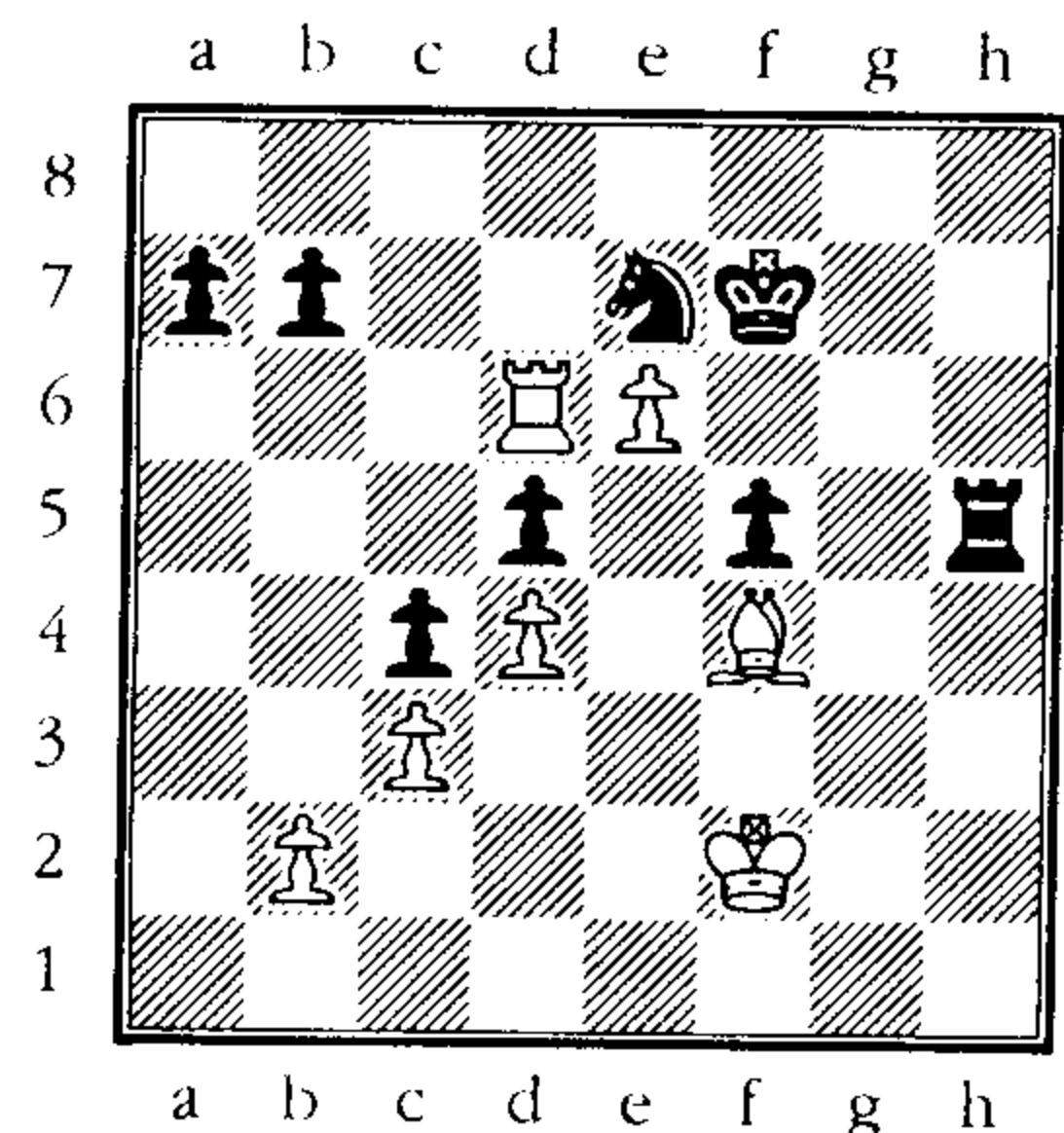
31...♖h7

After 31...♔xh5 32 ♖h1 ♔xf3 33 ♖xh8 ♔e4 34 ♖h6+ ♔f7 (34...♔d7 35 e6+ wins) 35 ♖h7+ ♔e6 36 ♖xb7 White is winning.

32 ♖g1?!

With 32 h6, retaining the passed pawn, (which is the correct way to proceed) White has every chance of keeping up the pressure and eventually enjoying the fruits of his labour.

32...♔xh5 33 ♔xh5 ♖xh5 34 ♖g6+ ♔f7 35 ♖d6 ♔e7 36 e6+



36...♔e8??

Correct was 36...♔g6 37 ♖d7 ♔f6 38 ♖xb7 ♖h4! 39 ♔e3 (39 ♔g3 ♔g6! 40 e7 ♖g4+ 41 ♔h2 ♔xe7 42 ♔e5+ ♔e6 43 ♖xa7 and Black can be no worse) 39...♖h3+ 40 ♔f2 etc.

37 ♖d7 ♔g6 38 ♔d6

The threats are looming!

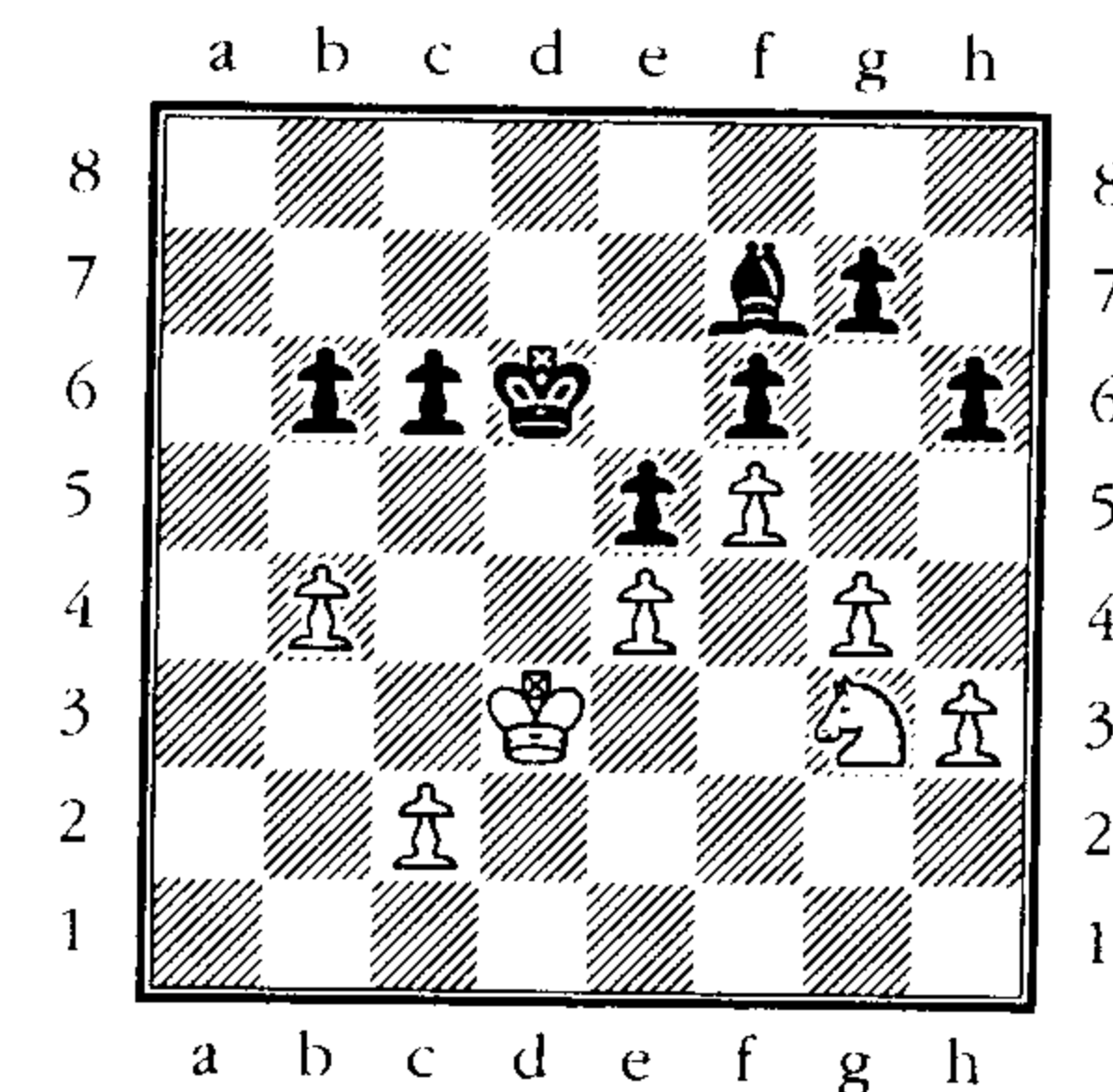
38...♔f8 39 ♖d8+! 1-0

Black resigned rather than face 39...♔xd8 40 e7+ with 41 exf8=♚ to follow.

As I explained in the introduction to this section a good (or in this case

a perfectly reasonable) piece can soon become bad—particularly after changes in the pawn structure. In the following game Simon Ansell needed to win to share first place with me. I came back into the tournament hall to see the following position:

White: Simon Ansell
Black: Nigel Saunders
Hanham Open 1997



The position is level. In return for the long-range piece, the bishop, Black has to keep one eye open to stop the white knight 'leaping' into h5. My hopes were high that Black would draw. True, Black needed a win himself, to get second place, but I felt he would be happy to draw with the master from the given position. It was interesting to see how Simon didn't panic but waited to see if Black would self-destruct.

43 c3 b5?!

Black would have been better off playing a waiting game, especially as his bishop stops the white king entering on c4 but, if he was going to push, it would have been more

logical to play 43...c5, putting the pawn on a dark square. The logic being that if you place your pawns on the opposite colour squares to the bishop it increases the scope of that piece. It would seem that if you put the pawns on the same colour squares as the bishop they would be easier to defend but in fact this just gives the bishop more work to do and it can become over-stretched.

44 ♖e3 c5 45 ♖f3

White patiently waits to see what Black plans to do next. If Black adopted the same policy then White would have to think about making a commitment himself or be resigned to the fact that the game is drawn.

45...cxb4

There is no need at this stage to release the tension as Black would be only too happy if White were to exchange.

46 cxb4

Now the pawn on b5 could prove to be a source of weakness.

46...♗e8 47 h4

White decides it is time for him to become the aggressor—but not until he manoeuvres his knight to a more suitable post.

47...♗e7 48 ♖h1 ♗f7 49 ♖f2 ♗c4 50 ♖d1 ♗d6 51 ♖c3 ♗c6

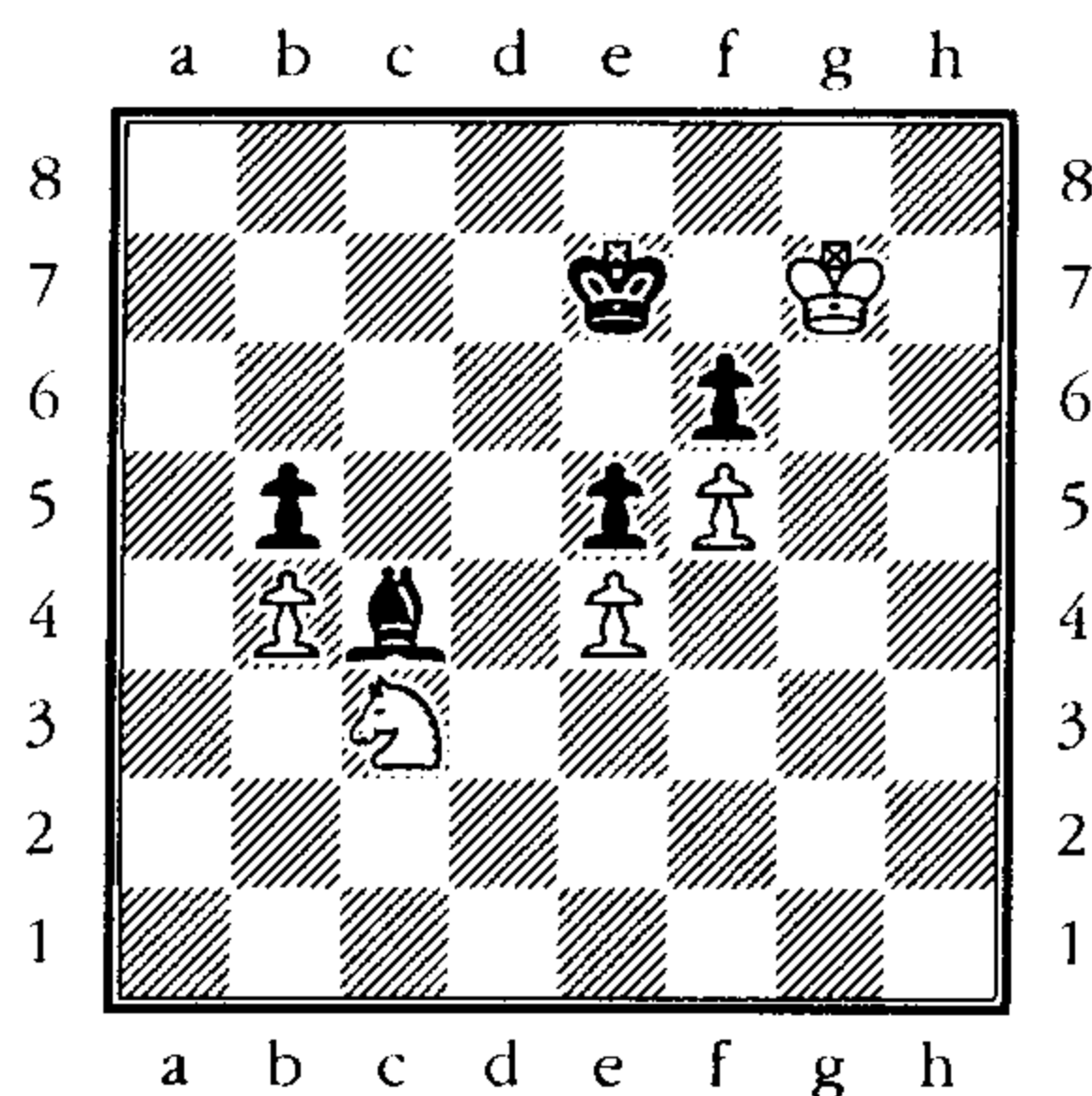
To free the bishop of its defensive duties—the only downside of this is that now the black king is too far away from the kingside.

52 g5! hxg5 53 hxg5 ♗d6 54 ♗g4 ♗c6??

Black should have brought his king to e7 for defensive duties. White would then still have to prove

the win, especially as 54...♗e7 55 ♗h5 ♗f7+ leads nowhere. Now however Black loses by force.

55 gxf6 gxf6 56 ♗h5 ♗d6 57 ♗g6 ♗e7 58 ♗g7



Black is in zugzwang.

58...♗f7

After 58...♗d3 White wins by 59 ♖d5+ ♗d6 60 ♖xf6 ♗c6 61 ♖d5! ♗xe4 62 ♖e7+ ♗d7 63 f6 and the pawn promotes.

59 ♖xb5 ♗e8 60 ♖a7 ♗a4 61 ♖c8+

Played to meet 61 b5 with 61...♗c2, although after 62 ♖c8+ ♗d7 63 ♗xf6 ♗xc8 64 ♗xe5 White is still winning.

61...♗d8 62 ♖b6

White realises he can win without risk and therefore needn't play an immediate ♗g7xf6.

62...♗c2 63 ♗xf6 ♗xe4 64 ♗xe5 ♗d3 65 f6 ♗e8 66 ♖c8 ♗f8 67 ♖d6

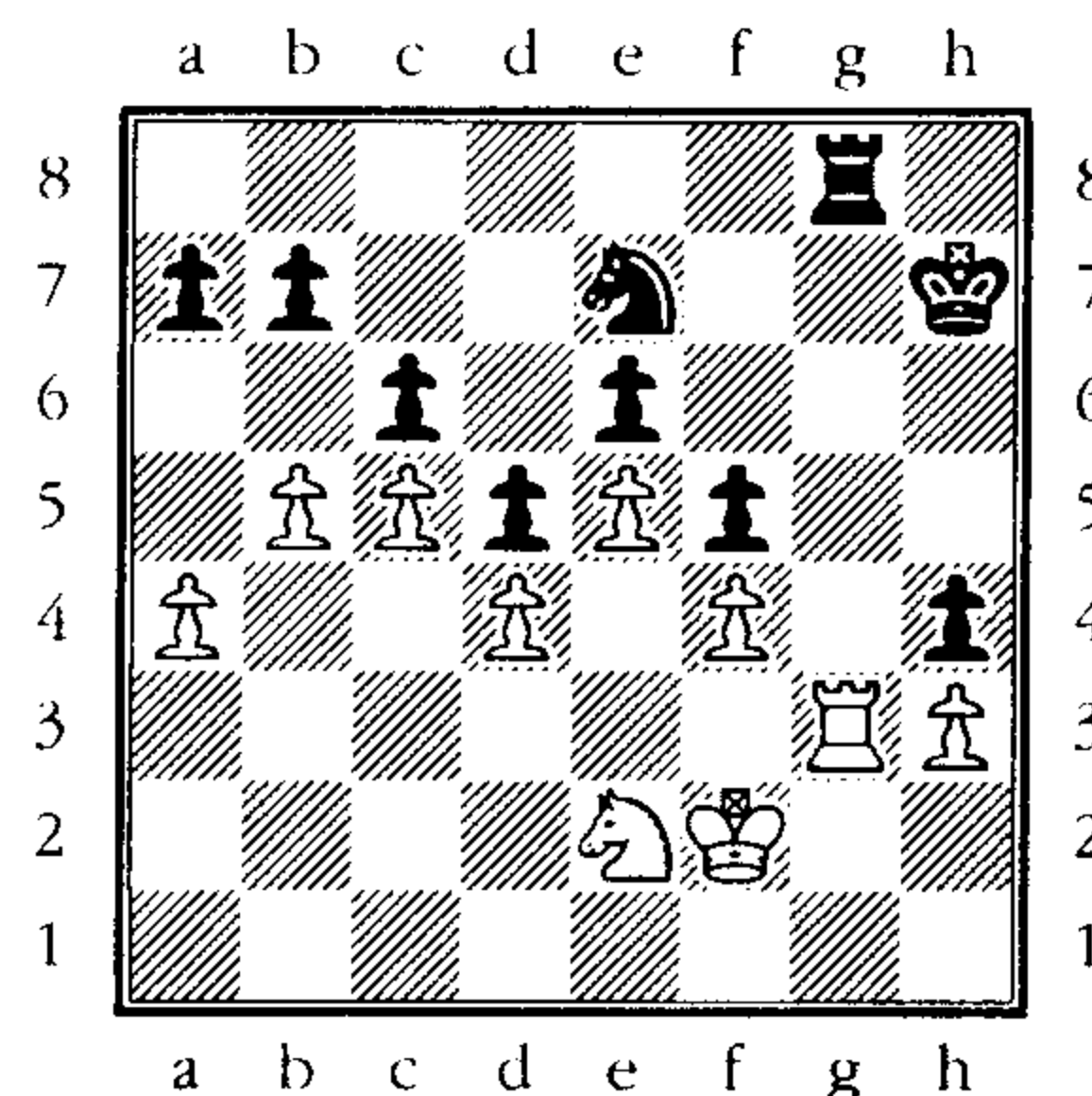
At best, Black can only hope to surrender his bishop for the 'b'-pawn—which would still be losing.

67...♗f1 68 b5 ♗e2 69 b6 ♗a6 70 b7 ♗xb7 71 ♖xb7 ♗f7 72 ♖d6+ 1-0

As the original position was level it would have been interesting to see what had happened if the colours had been reversed! Congratulations to Simon, though, for his dogged persistence.

Finally we will look at a fascinating knight and pawn ending:

White: David Buckley
Black: David Collier
Bristol League Open 1998



Here Black offered a draw but White has a strong plan at his disposal. Black must reply precisely if he is to save the game.

32 ♖xg8 ♗xg8

With no entry squares for either king it looks as though the game should 'peter out', especially as the pawn on h4 can always be defended by...♖g6.

33 ♖c1!

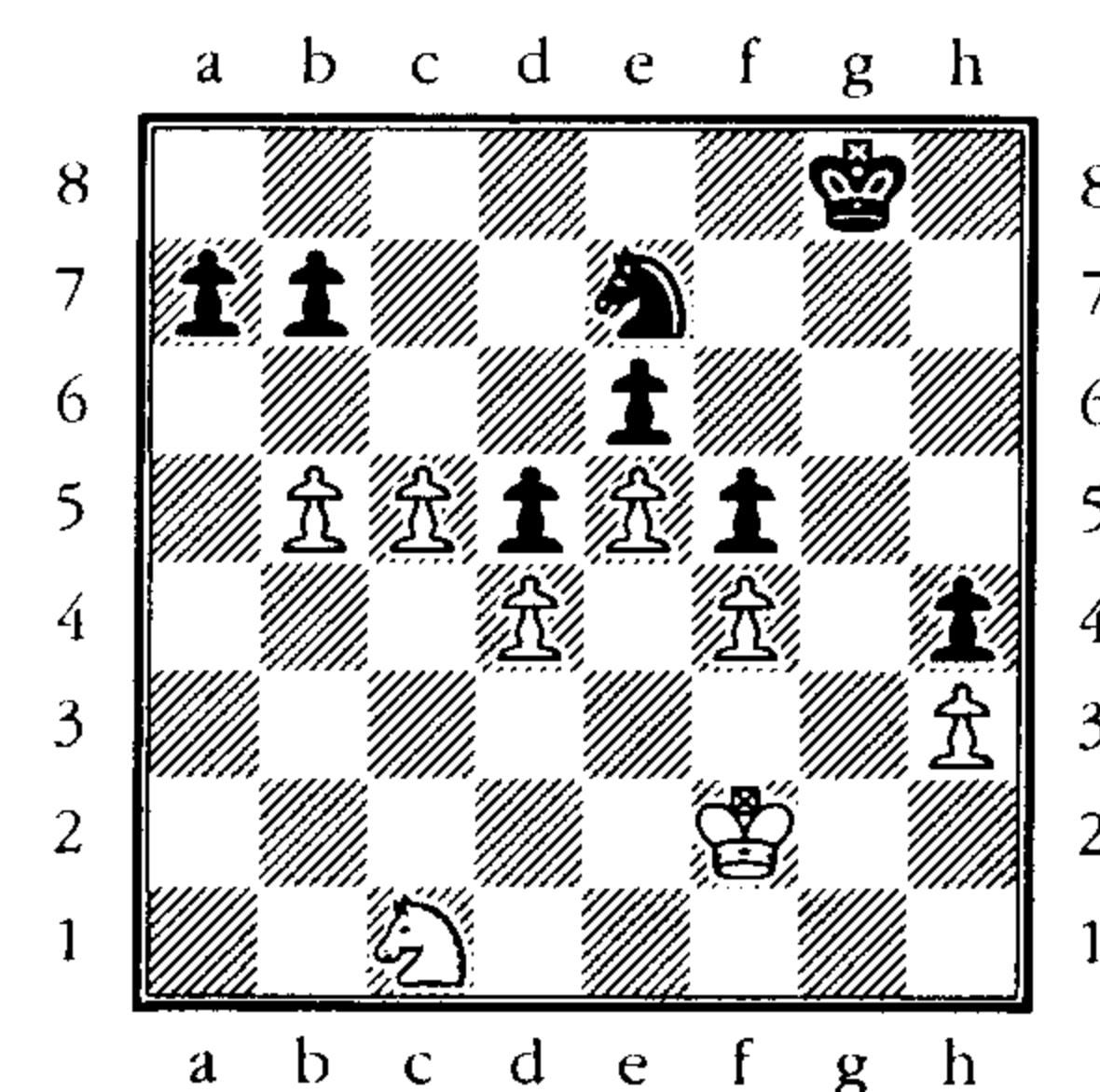
With no exploitable weaknesses of his own, White has time to manoeuvre his knight around to a5

where it would obviously become a menace. White's play will revolve around his far-advanced queenside pawns.

33...cxb5

Little better is 33...♗f7 as after 34 ♖b3 cxb5 35 axb5 a6 36 c6! b6 (36...bxc6 37 b6! and the pawn cannot be stopped) 37 bxa6 ♖xc6 38 ♖d2 b5 39 ♗e3 b4 40 ♗d3, now that Black's pawn is no longer a real menace, White can follow up with ♖d2-f3xh4 winning.

34 axb5



34...a6?

Tired from a long, hard game, Black has not got the energy to push the pawn one square further(!) with 34...a5! which is the only way to proceed, e.g. 35 c6 b6 (35...bxc6?? 36 b6) 36 ♗e3 ♗f8 and now:

a) 37 ♗d2 37...♗e8 38 ♗c3 ♗d8 39 ♖d3 ♖g6 and White cannot make progress;

b) 37 ♖e2 ♗e8 38 ♖g1

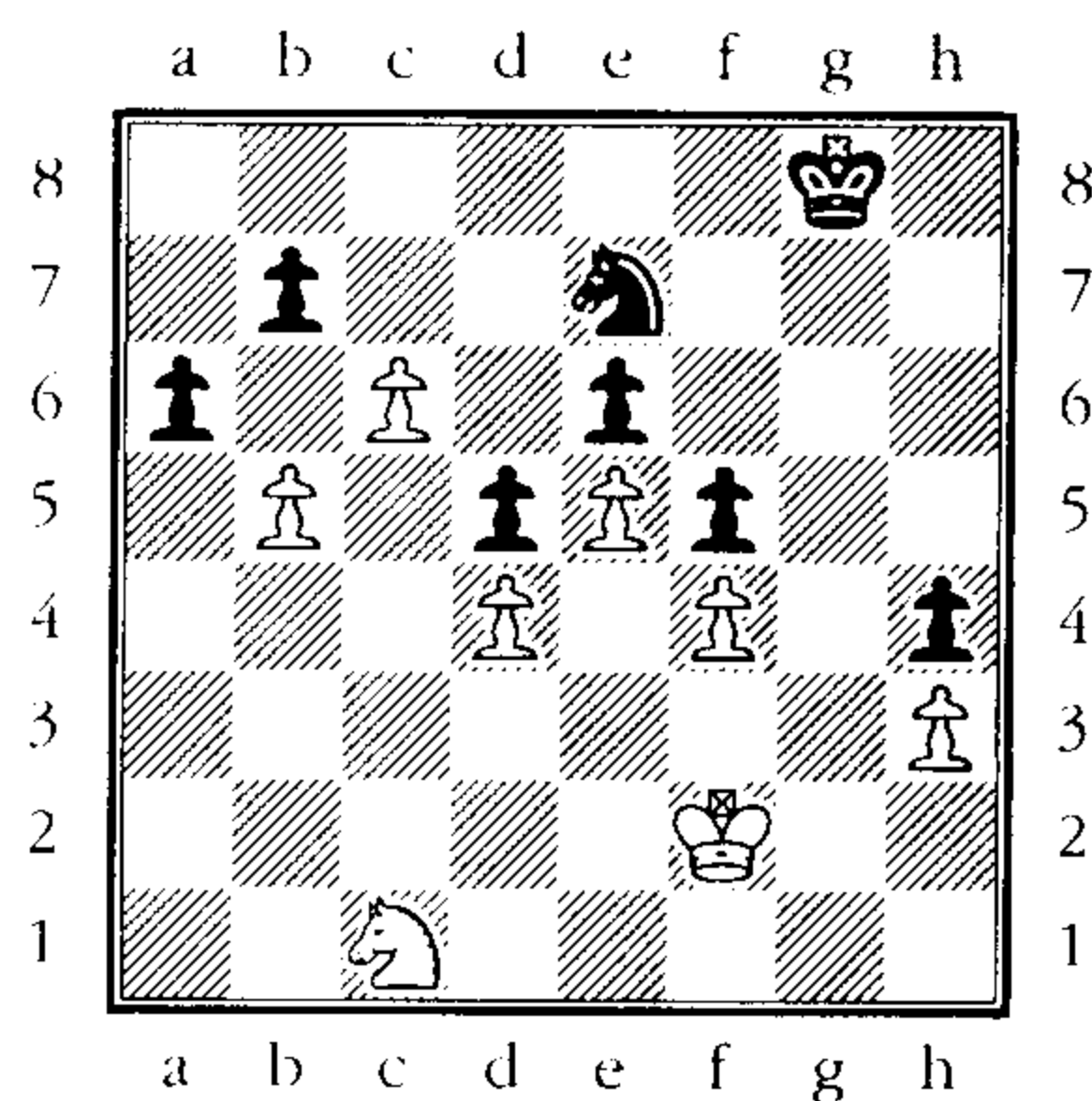
with the further possibilities of

b1) 38...♗d8 39 ♗d2 ♖g6 40 ♖e2 ♗c7 and again the position is drawn;

and

b2) 38...♖c8 39 ♖f3 (39 ♖e2 ♖a7 40 ♖c3 ♖d8 and I don't see how White can make progress) 39...♖a7 40 ♖xh4 ♖xb5 41 ♖f3 ♖c7 (41...a4 42 ♖d3 a3 43 ♖c2, when the combination of White's two passed pawns will be difficult to stop without giving up the 'a'-pawn which is Black's only real source of counterplay) 42 ♖d3 b5 43 ♖c3 ♖f7 with virtual deadlock—if either side attempts to make further progress they might well find themselves on the receiving end!

35 c6!



35...axb5

No stronger is 35...b6 as after 36 bxa6 ♖xc6 is good for White after 37 ♖e3 b5 38 ♖b3 ♖f7 39 ♖d2 b4 40 ♖d3 when Black's 'h'-pawn will drop or, if he tries to save it with 40...♖g6 41 ♖f3 ♖h5 42 ♖g5, Black will lose first his 'e'-pawn and then his 'd'-pawn.

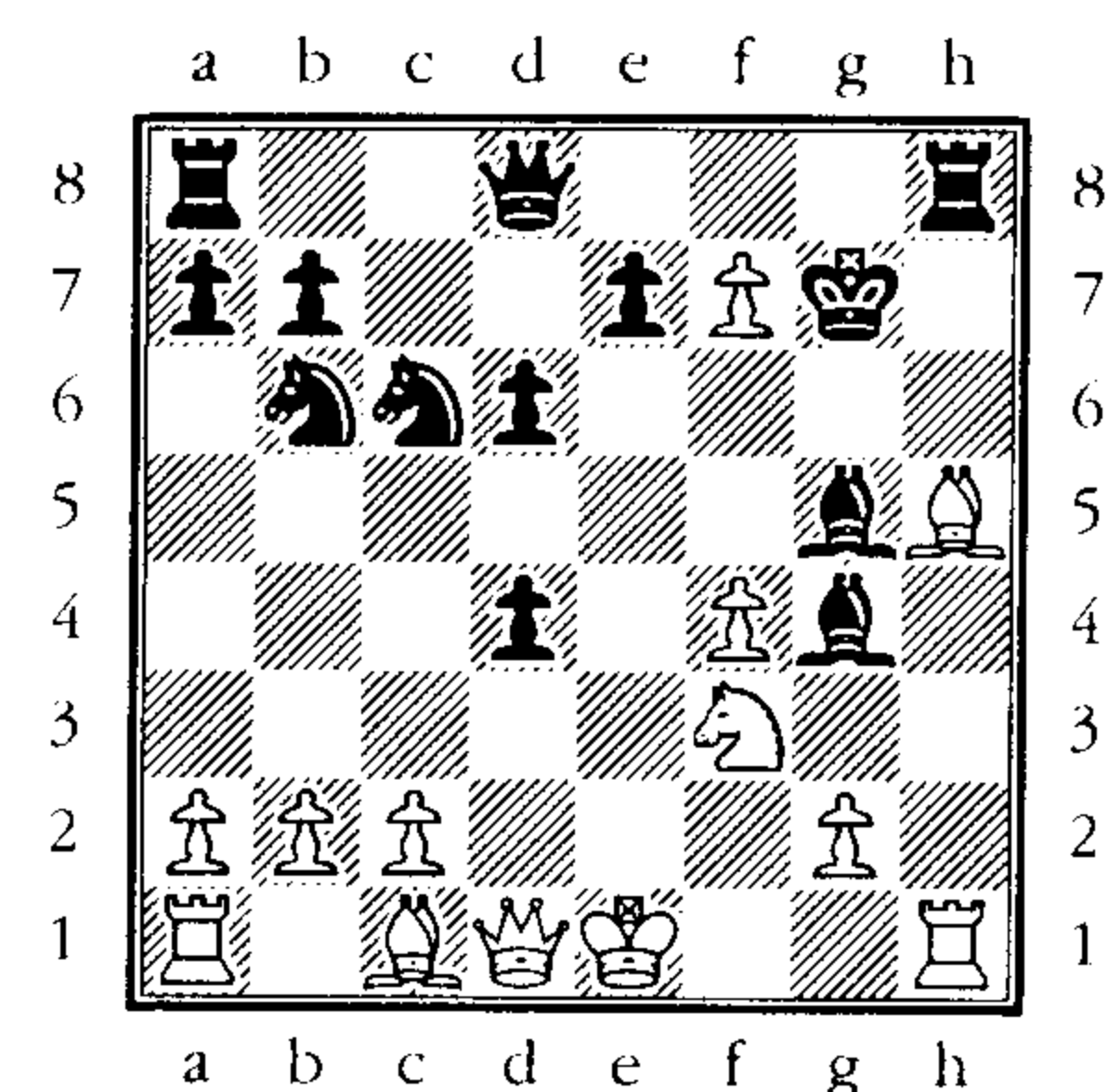
36 cxb7 ♖c6 37 ♖b3 ♖f7 38 ♖c5 ♖e7

After 38...♖b8, to stop White's next move, White will play 39 ♖e3 ♖e7 40 ♖d3 ♖f7 41 ♖c3 ♖e7 42 ♖b4, not only taking on b5 but infiltrating to b6 etc.

39 ♖a6 b4 40 ♖e3! b3 41 ♖d3 b2 42 ♖c2 ♖xd4+ 43 ♖xb2 ♖c6 44 b8=♖ ♖xb8 45 ♖xb8 1-0

The following game played in the final round of a weekend tournament against an experienced former Welsh international was a real epic and decided first prize in the event.

White: Dafydd Johnston
Black: Chris Baker
Monmouth Open 1997

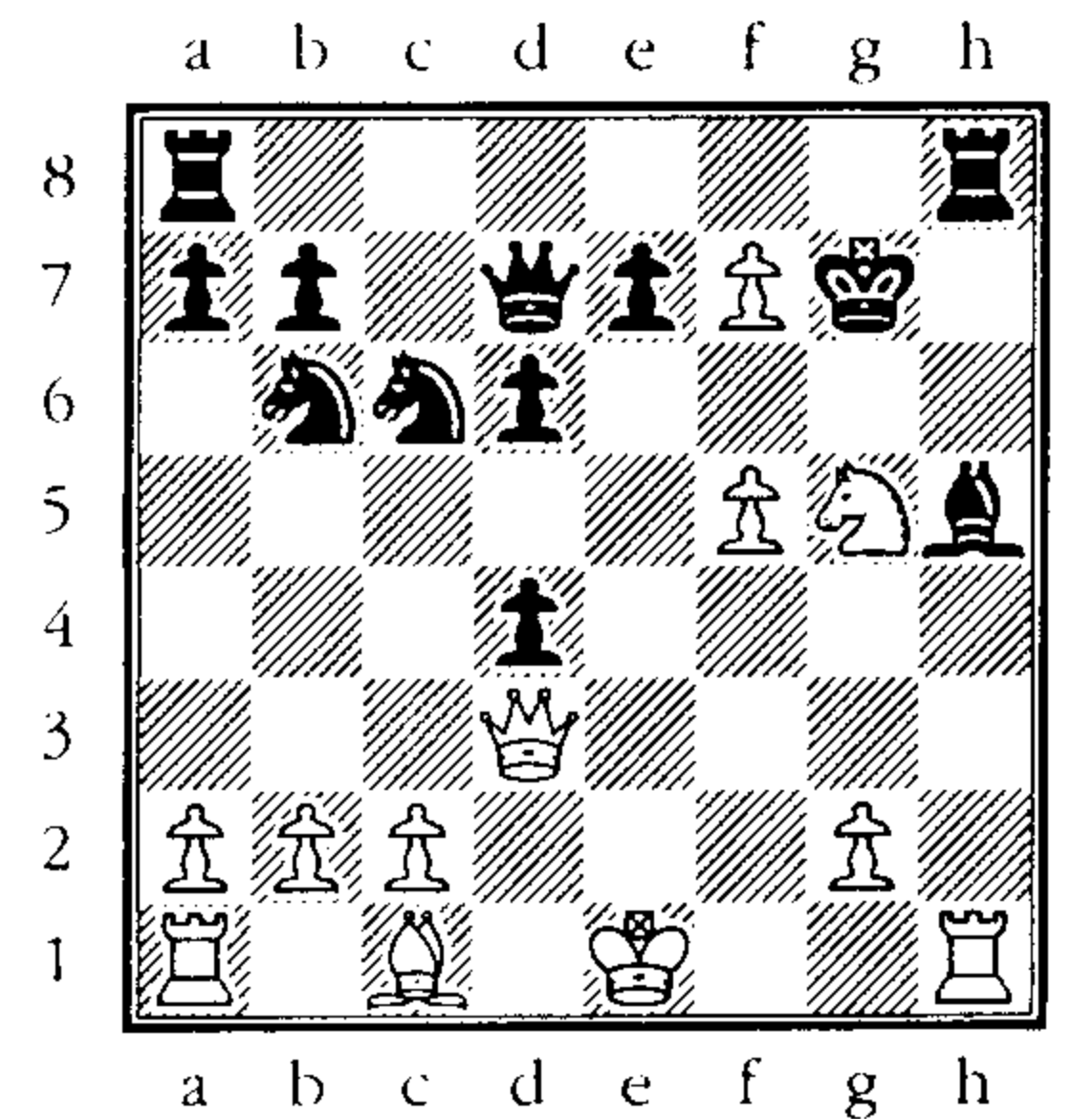


We pick up the position with White about to play his 18th move. After a super-aggressive opening it looks as though White's play is going to run out of steam and Black's extra material win the day—but in fact this is not the beginning of the end but just the end of the beginning!

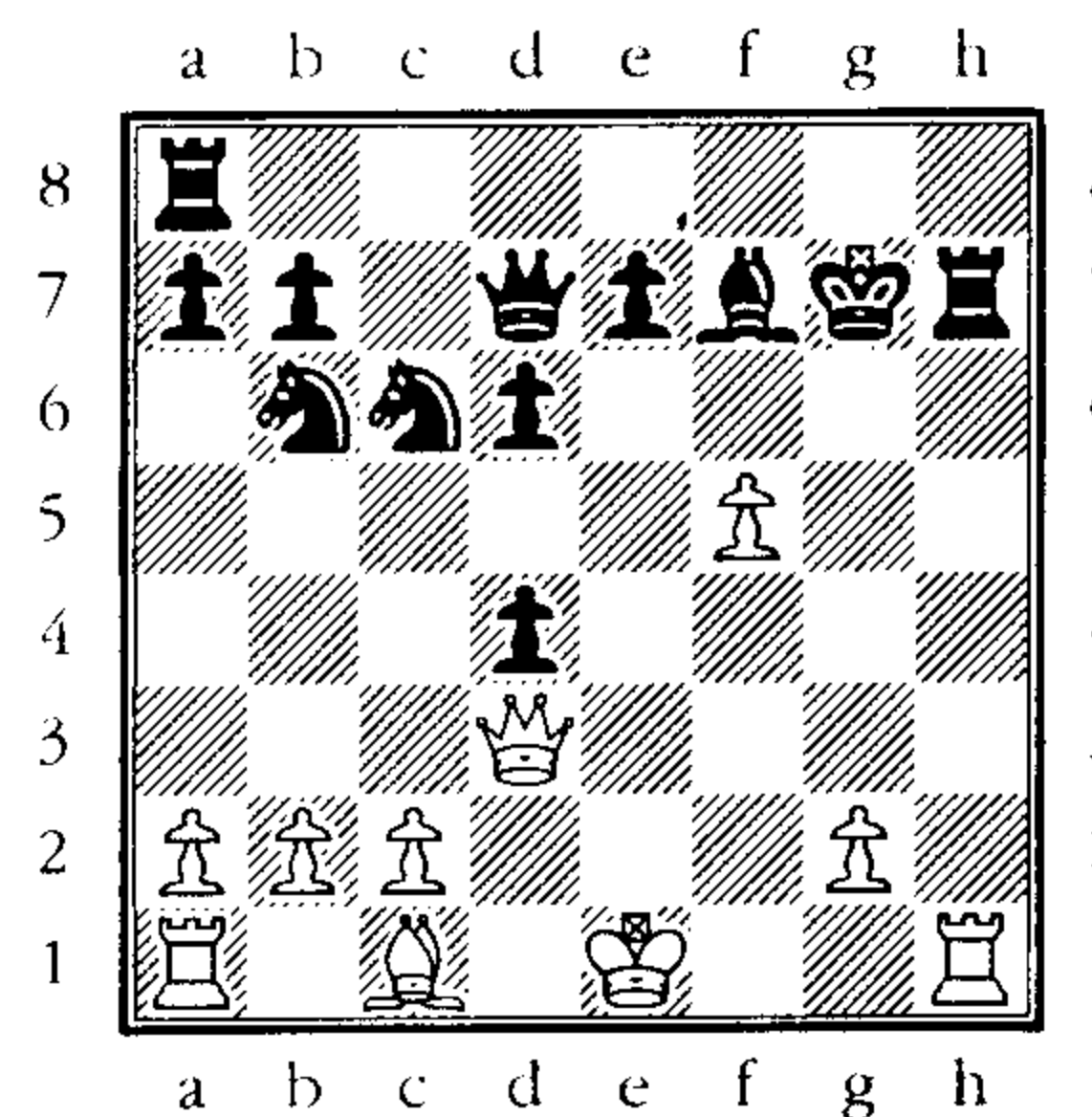
18 ♖xg5!

If White attempts to continue the attack with 18 ♖d3!? there are some

interesting tactical possibilities after 18...♖xh5 19 ♖xg5 ♖d7 20 f5 and now:



a) 20...♖xf7 21 ♖h7! ♖xh7 with the further possibilities of:

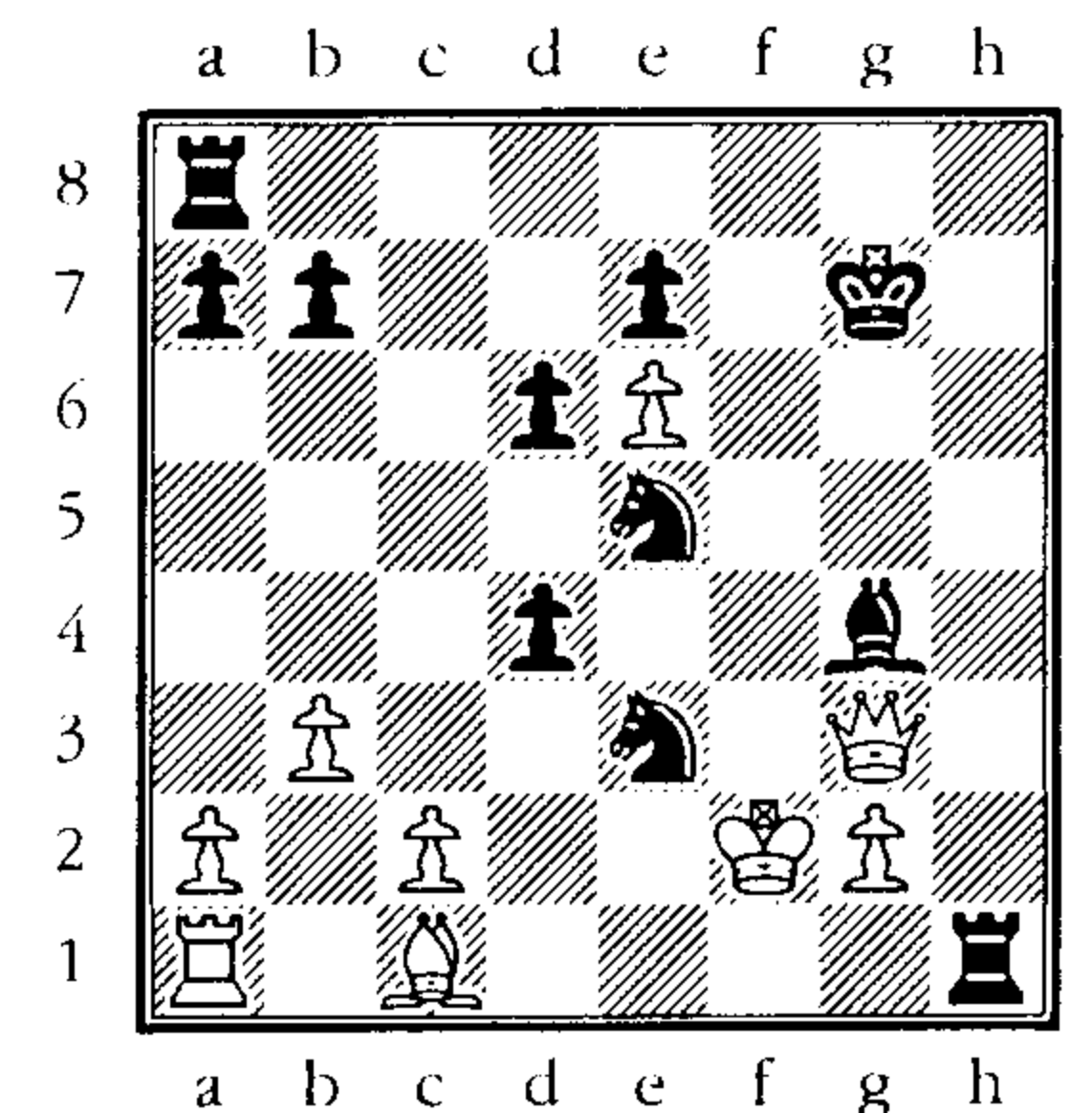


a1) 22 f6+ ♖xf6 23 ♖xh7 ♖e6+ 24 ♖f2 ♖g6 25 ♖g5+! ♖e5! (25...♖xg5 26 ♖h4+ ♖f5 27 g4+ ♖e4 28 ♖ae1+ ♖d5 29 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 with an unclear position) 26 ♖ae1+ ♖d5 27 ♖xe6 ♖xh7 and Black is well on top.

a2) 22 ♖g3+ 22...♖h8 23 ♖xh7+ ♖xh7 24 ♖h4+ ♖g8 25 ♖g5+ ♖h8 (after 25...♖f8 26 ♖h6+ Black must return to g8 as 26...♖e8 27 ♖h8+ ♖g8 28 ♖xg8 is mate) and White

should take the draw as if he tries for more by 26 ♖f4 then 26...♖g8! 27 0-0-0 ♖h7 28 ♖h1 e5! 29 fxe6 ♖xe6 and White's attack leads nowhere.

b) 20...♖e5 21 ♖e6+ (21 ♖g3 ♖g4!) 21...♖xe6!! 22 ♖g3+ ♖g4 23 fxe6 ♖xh1+ 24 ♖f2 ♖bc4 and Black's pieces combine so well that White has real problems, e.g. 25 b3 ♖e3

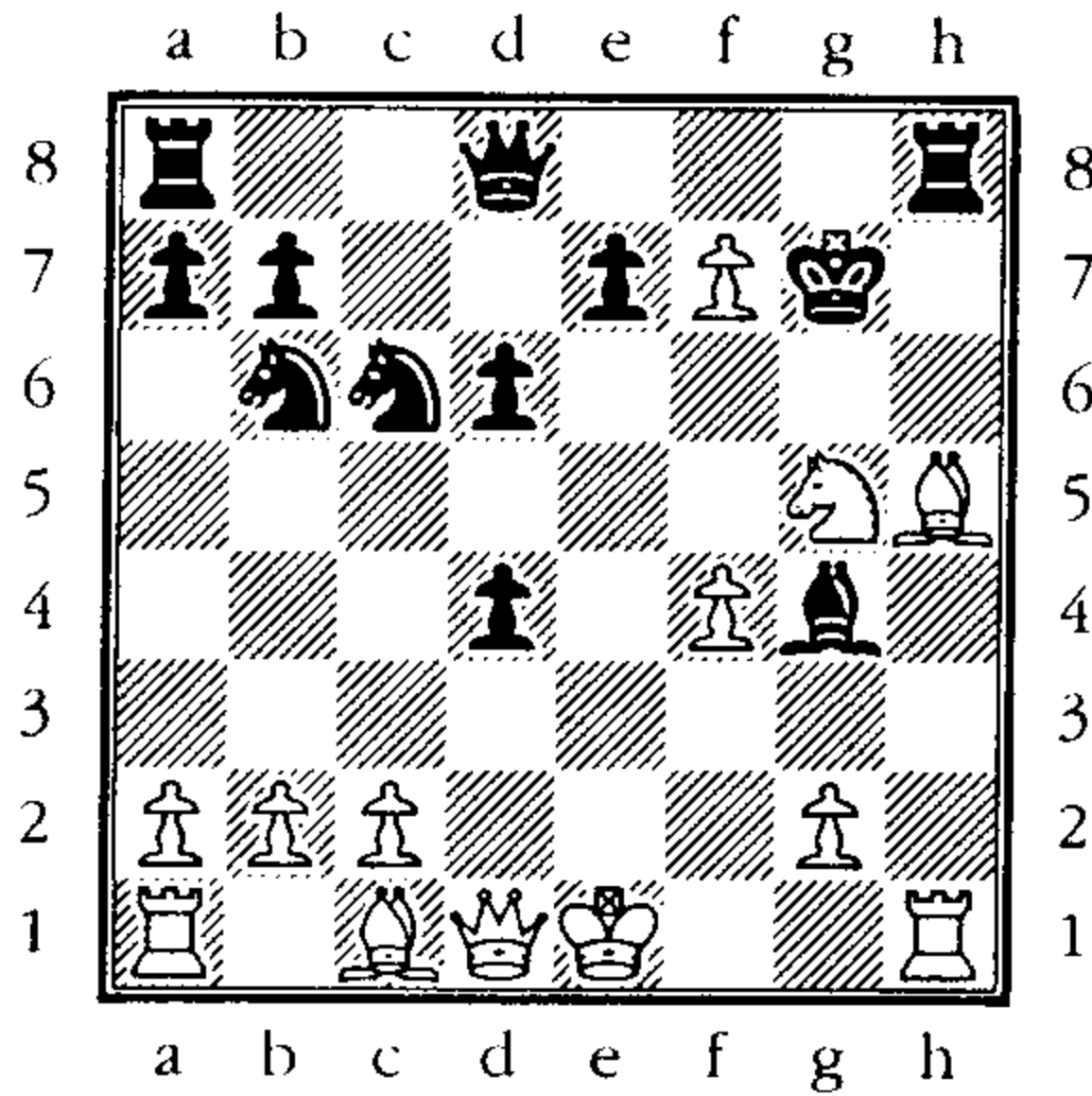


and now:

b1) 26 ♖xe3 dxex3+ 27 ♖xe3 ♖xa1 28 ♖g5+ ♖g6 (28...♖h7? 29 ♖xe7!—29 ♖h4+? ♖g5 ends most of Black's problems—29...♖g6 30 ♖e8 and, with his rook out of play on a1, it is Black who now has difficulties i.e. 30...♖xe8 31 fxe8=♖+ ♖h7 32 ♖e7+ ♖g6 33 ♖xd6 and White is winning) 29 ♖xg4 ♖xa2 and, despite the pawns on e6 and f7, White is in trouble, e.g. 30 ♖c4 ♖e5 31 ♖c7 ♖f6!, guarding e7 and attacking e6. Who says a king can't be a good attacking piece—even in the middlegame!

b2) 26 ♖b2 ♖d1+ 27 ♖xd1 ♖xd1, not only winning the exchange but guarding d4 as well, then 28 ♖h4 (28 ♖f4 ♖xe6 29

♙xd4 ♖xd4 30 ♚xd4 ♙xf7 Black's rook and two pieces will prove to be far too strong for the queen to handle) 28...♙xe6 29 ♚xe7 ♙xf7 and Black has too much of a material advantage.



18...♙xd1 19 ♖e6+ ♙f6 20 ♖xd8 ♙xh5

20...♙xc2!? is quite a reasonable alternative.

21 f8=♚+ ♖xf8 22 ♖xc6 bxc6 23 ♖xh5

The dust is starting to settle and White offered a draw here. I felt as though I had 'weathered the storm' and with my next move would take the initiative for the first time in the game.

23...♖h8!

Exchanging off White's only developed piece.

24 ♖xh8 ♖xh8 25 ♙f2 ♖h1

25...♙f5 is tempting but after 26 c3 c5 27 cxd4 cxd4 28 b3 e5 29 fxe5 dxe5 30 ♙b2 I thought that the reduction of material and the fact that White's pieces were getting developed would give my opponent chances of holding the game,

whereas the move I chose kept things under control.

26 b3 c5

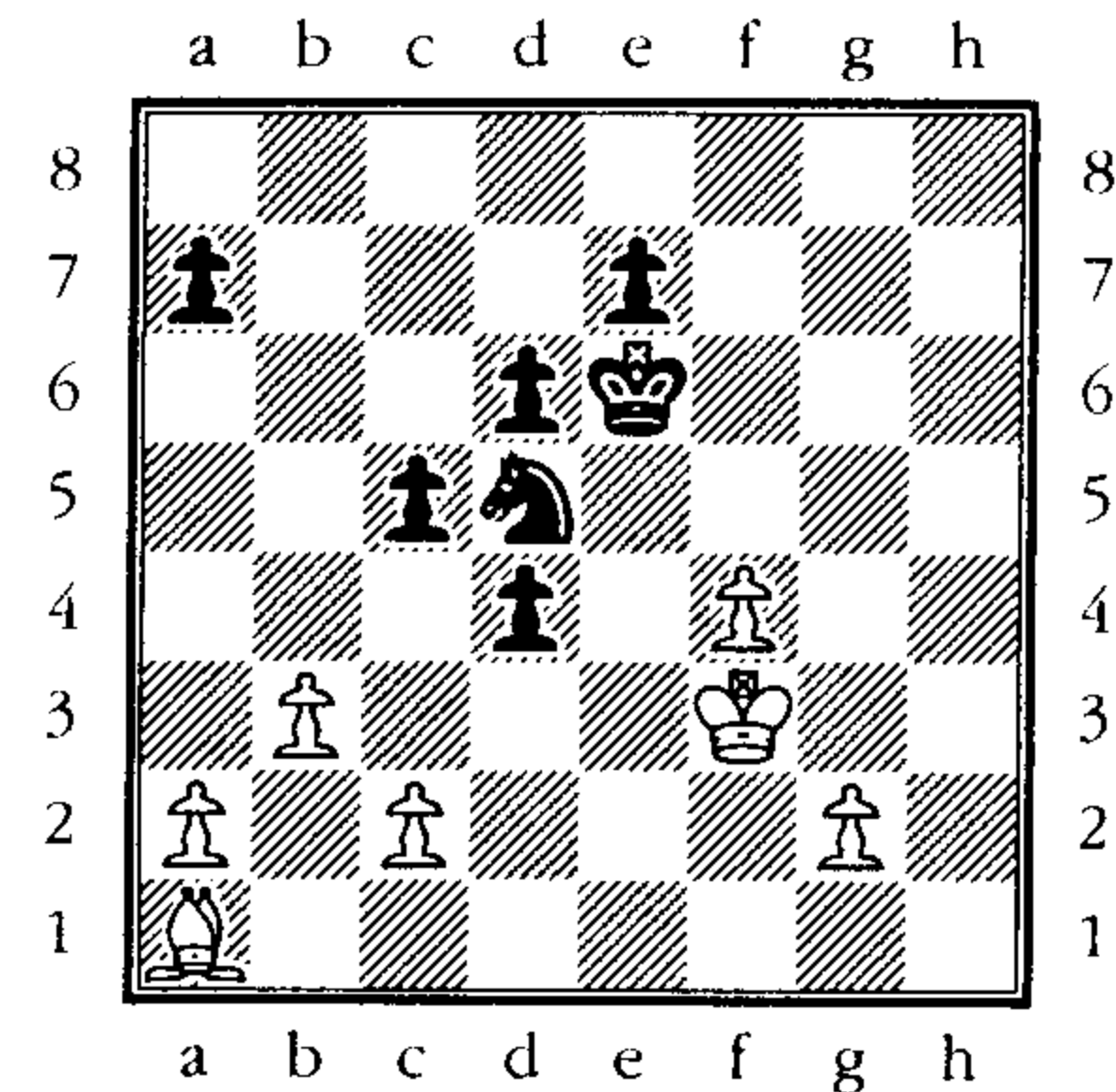
Making sure that d4 wouldn't be *en prise* with check after White plays his bishop to b2.

27 ♙b2 ♖xa1 28 ♙xa1

Despite all of Black's pawns being on dark squares, White's bishop is not a great piece.

28...♖d5 29 ♙f3 ♙e6

After 29...♖b4?! 30 c3 ♖c2 31 ♙b2 d3 (31...♖e1+ 32 ♙e4!) 32 c4+ ♙e6 33 ♙c3 it is White who has the advantage.



30 a3

30 g4, getting his passed pawn rolling, would have been more testing, e.g. 30...♖b4 31 c3 dxc3 32 ♙xc3 ♖xa2 33 f5+ ♙f7 34 ♙d2 when there is still a lot of play in the position, for example 34...e6 35 ♙e4 and now:

a) 35...d5+ 36 ♙e5 exf5 37 gxf5 d4 (37...c4 38 bxc4 dxc4 39 ♙d4 draws) 38 ♙d6 ♖c3 39 ♙e1 ♖b1 40 ♙xc5 d3 41 ♙b5 ♙f6 42 ♙a6 ♙xf5 43 ♙xa7 ♙e4 44 b4 drawing;

b) 35...♖b4!? 36 ♙xb4? (36 g5! leads to some difficult moments for both sides 36...d5+ 37 ♙e5 ♖d3+ 38 ♙d6 exf5 39 ♙xd5 ♖f2! 40 ♙f4 ♖e4 41 ♙c6 ♙g6 42 ♙e3! with a likely draw) 36...cxb4 37 fxe6+ ♙xe6 38 g5 a5 39 g6 ♙f6 and White loses i.e. 40 ♙d5 (40 ♙d4 ♙xg6 41 ♙c4 ♙f5 42 ♙b5 d5 43 ♙xa5 d4 44 ♙xb4 ♙e4! 45 ♙c4 d3 46 ♙c3 ♙e3 and the black pawn queens) 40...a4 winning.

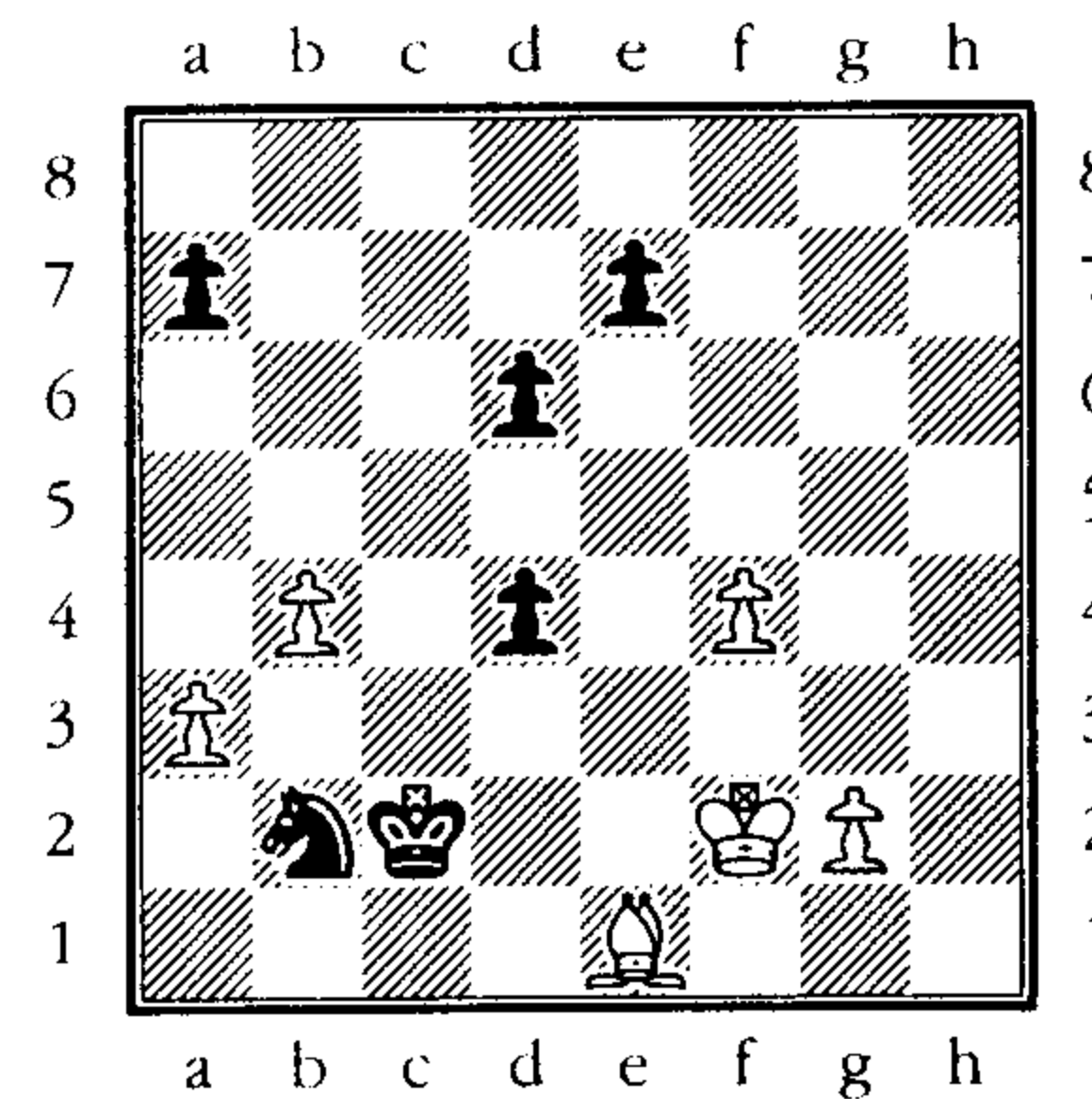
30...♖e3 31 c3 ♖c2 32 ♙b2 ♖e1+ 33 ♙g3

33 ♙g4 ♖d3 34 ♙a1 ♖c1 is good for Black.

33...♙d5

Again 33...♖d3 34 ♙a1 ♖c1 is an option but the move played is also good.

34 cxd4 cxd4 35 ♙c1 ♙e4 36 b4 ♖d3 37 ♙d2 ♖b2 38 ♙f2 ♙d3 39 ♙e1 ♙c2



40 ♙e2

40 ♙f3!?, with the idea of eventually giving up the bishop for Black's 'd'-pawn and getting his

own passed pawn on the go, leads to interesting play:

a) 40...d3?! 41 g4 ♖c4 42 g5 d2 43 ♙xd2 ♖xd2+ 44 ♙e3 ♖c4+ 45 ♙e4 ♖b6 46 g6 ♖d7 47 ♙d5 ♖f6+ 48 ♙e6 ♖g8 49 ♙f7 ♖h6+ 50 ♙xe7 d5 51 ♙f6 (51 f5 ♖xf5+ 52 ♙e6 ♖g7+ 53 ♙xd5 ♙b3 54 ♙c6 ♙xa3 55 b5 ♙b4 draws) 51...d4 52 ♙g5 ♖g8 53 f5 d3 54 f6 ♖xf6! 55 ♙xf6 d2 56 g7 d1=♚ 57 g8=♚ ♚a1+ with a likely draw.

b) 40...♙d1! 41 ♙f2 d3 42 ♙xa7 and now:

b1) 42...d2?? 43 ♙e3, giving up the bishop along the other diagonal, is now winning for White thanks to his passed pawns on the queenside, e.g. 43...♖c4 44 ♙xd2 ♙xd2 45 g4 ♖xa3 46 g5 ♖c2 47 g6 ♖d4+ 48 ♙e4 ♖e6 49 f5 ♖g7 50 b5.

b2) 42...♖c4! 43 ♙d4 ♙c2 wins.

40...♖c4 41 g4 d3+ 42 ♙f2 d5

Here Black misses an easier win with 42...e5!, e.g.

a) 43 f5 43...e4 44 f6 e3+ 45 ♙g3 ♖e5 and Black wins.

b) 43 fxe5 ♖xe5! (43...dxe5 44 ♙f3 d2 45 ♙xd2 ♖xd2+ 46 ♙e3 ♖c4+ 47 ♙e4 ♙b3 48 g5 ♙xa3 49 g6 ♖d6+ 50 ♙xe5 ♖e8 51 ♙e6 ♖g7+ 52 ♙f6 ♖h5+ 53 ♙g5 with a draw) 44 g5 d2 45 ♙xd2 ♙xd2 and Black is winning.

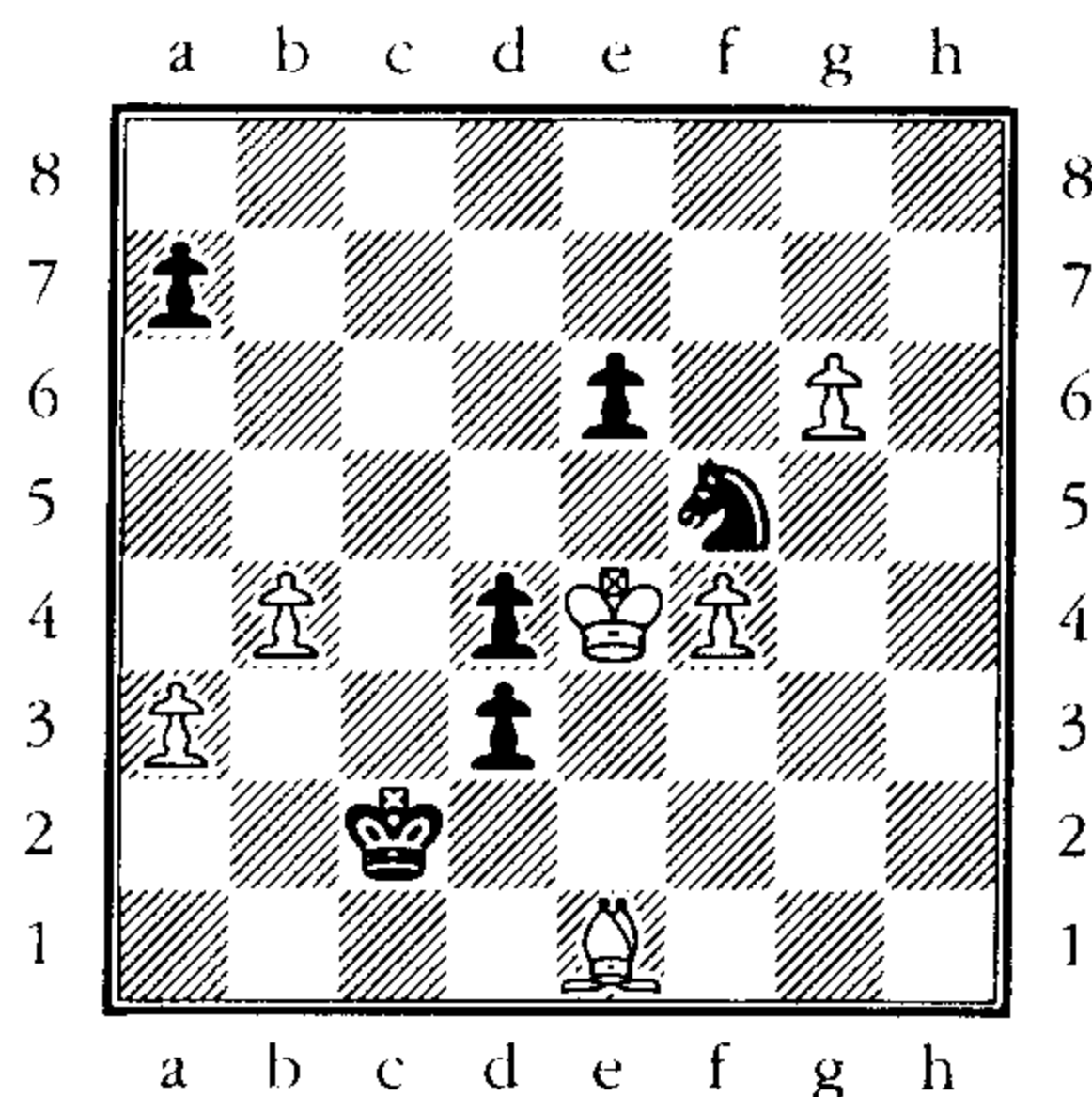
43 g5 ♖d6!

A move that should stop the counterplay but one that was to some extent spoiled by a wrong follow-up.

44 g6 d4?!

The time was right to win the piece with 44...d2 45 ♔xd2 ♕xd2 46 g7 ♖e4+ 47 ♔f3 ♗f6.

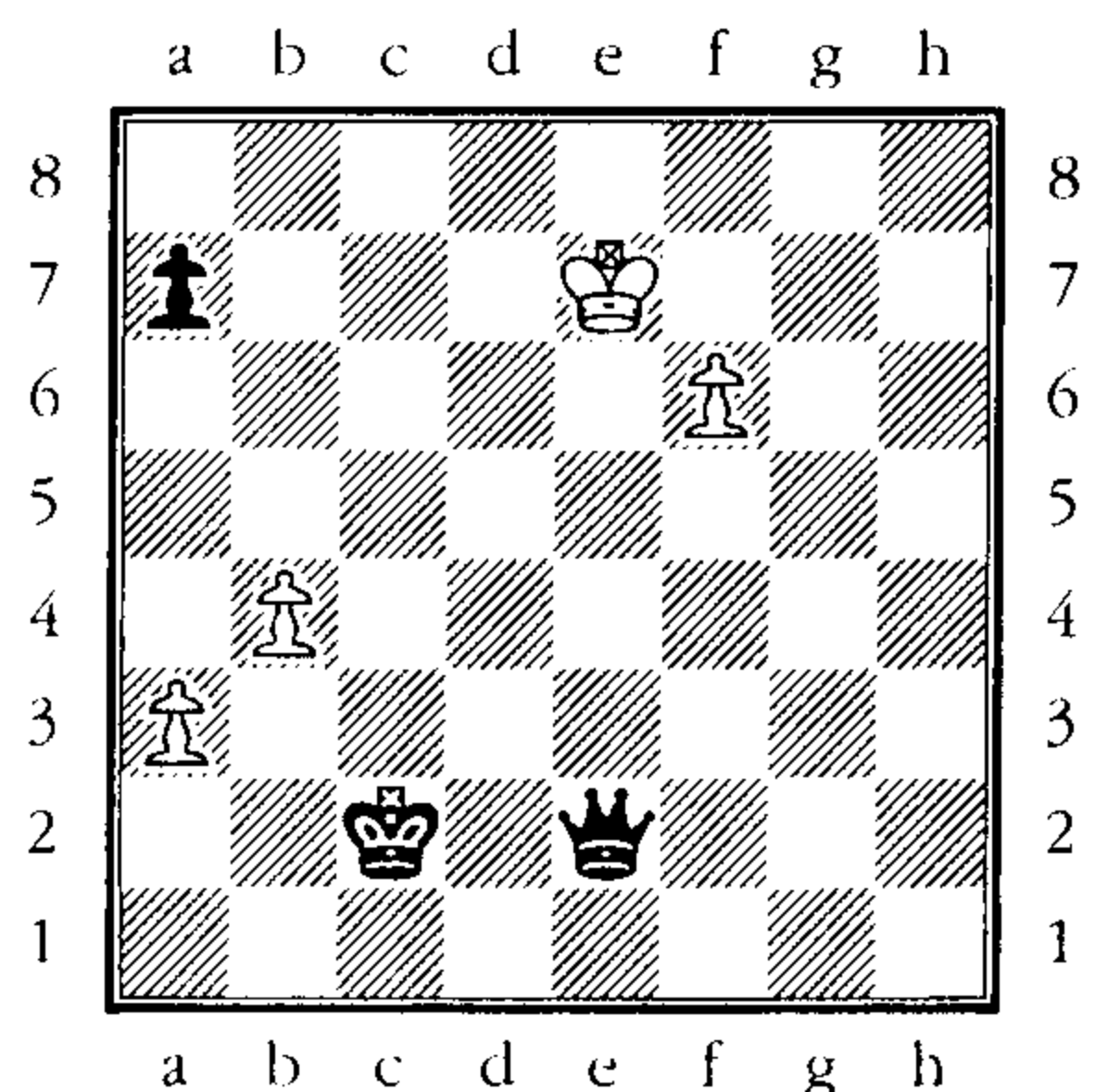
45 ♔f3 ♗f5 46 ♔e4 e6



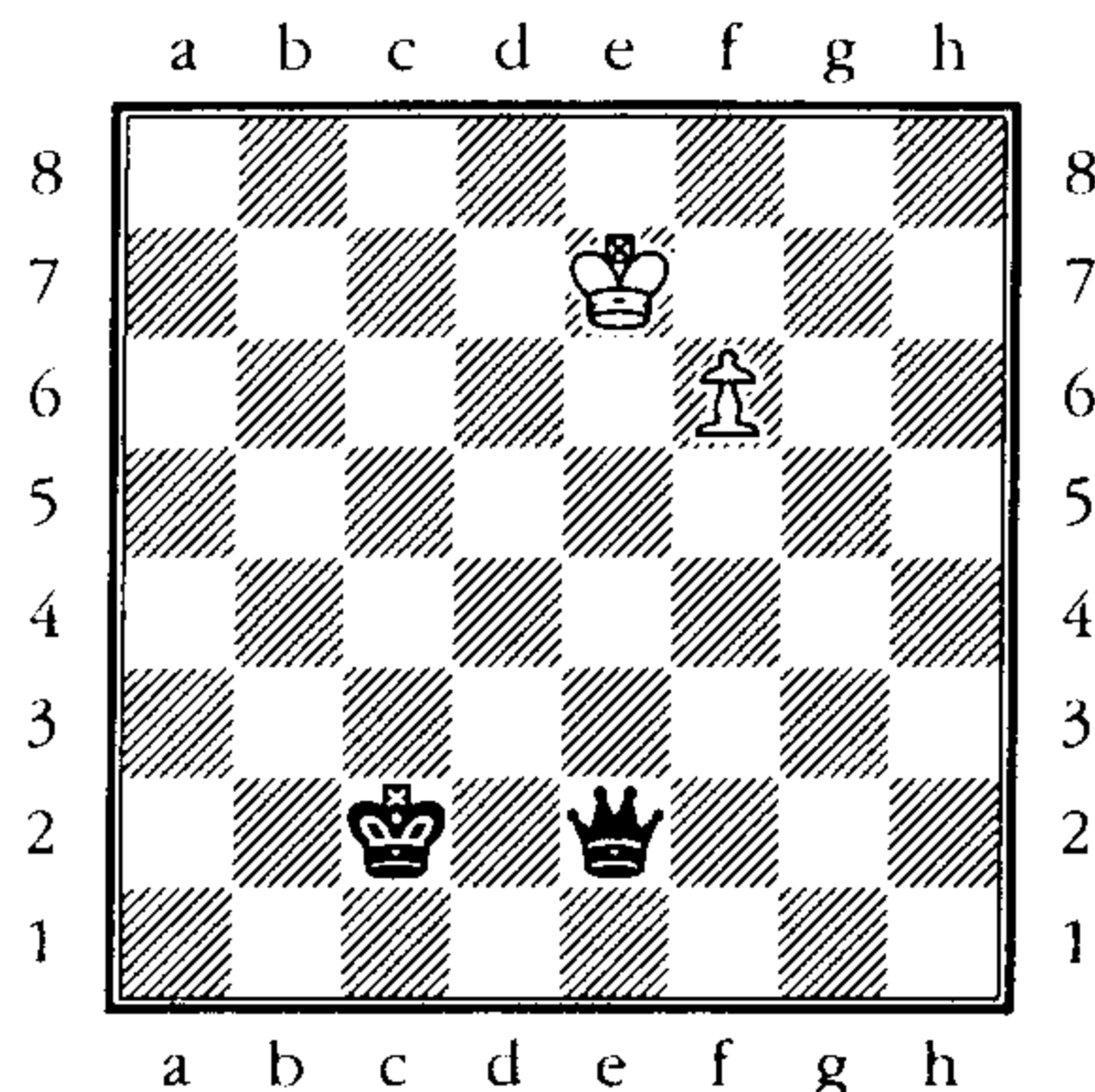
47 g7

47 b5 is too slow—just! i.e. 47...d2 48 ♔xd2 ♕xd2 49 a4 d3 50 a5 ♕c3 51 b6 axb6 52 axb6 d2 53 b7 d1=♕ 54 b8=♕ ♕d5 mate.

47...♗xg7 48 ♔xd4 ♗f5+ 49 ♕e5 ♗h4! 50 ♕xe6 ♗f3 51 f5 ♗xe1 52 f6 ♗f3 53 ♔f5 ♗d4+ 54 ♕e5 ♗c6+ 55 ♔d6 ♗d8 56 ♕e7 d2! 57 ♔xd8 d1=♕+ 58 ♕e7 ♕e2+ 0-1



White resigned as Black will win after 59 ♔d7 ♕d3+ 60 ♕e7 ♕e4+ 61 ♔d7 ♕d5+ 62 ♕e7 ♕e5+ 63 ♔f7 ♕b3. Even without the queen-side pawns Black would win from the diagrammed position with this manoeuvre:



1 ♔d7

White doesn't want to block the pawn but must stop the queen getting to e8.

1...♕d3+ 2 ♕e7 ♕e4+ 3 ♔d7 ♕d5+ 4 ♕e7 ♕e5+ 5 ♔f7 ♔d3

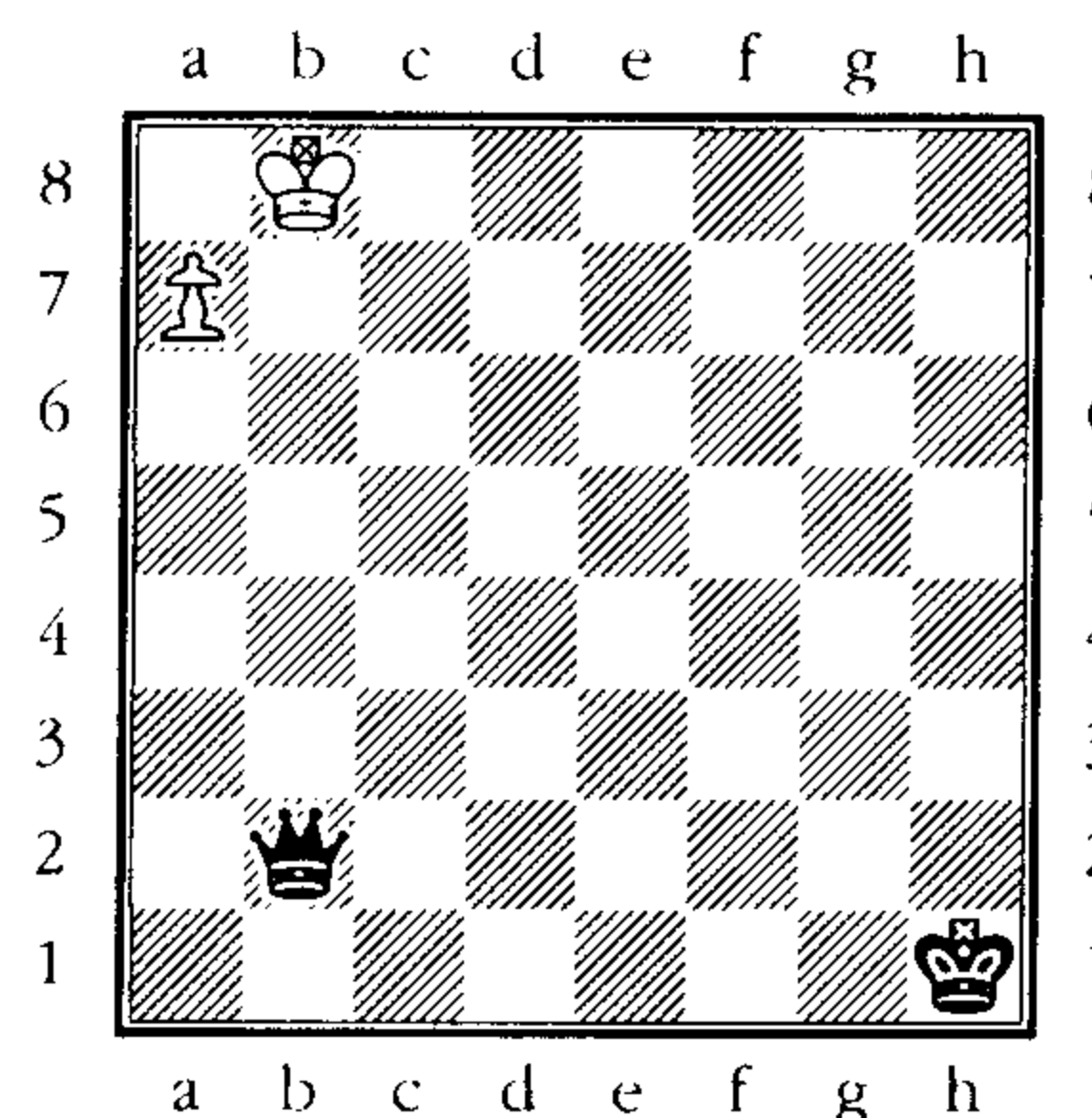
Each time the pawn is blocked Black can bring his king a square closer.

6 ♔g6 ♕g3+ 7 ♔h7 ♕h4+ 8 ♔g7 ♕g5+ 9 ♔f7 ♕e4 10 ♔e6 ♕d5+ 11 ♕e7 ♕e5+ 12 ♔f7 ♔f5 0-1

The pawn falls.

This queen and pawn ending is quite instructive and the same technique also works if the pawn starts on the seventh rank. To complete the picture I will show you the two types of king and queen vs. king and pawn ending that are a standard draw.

1a

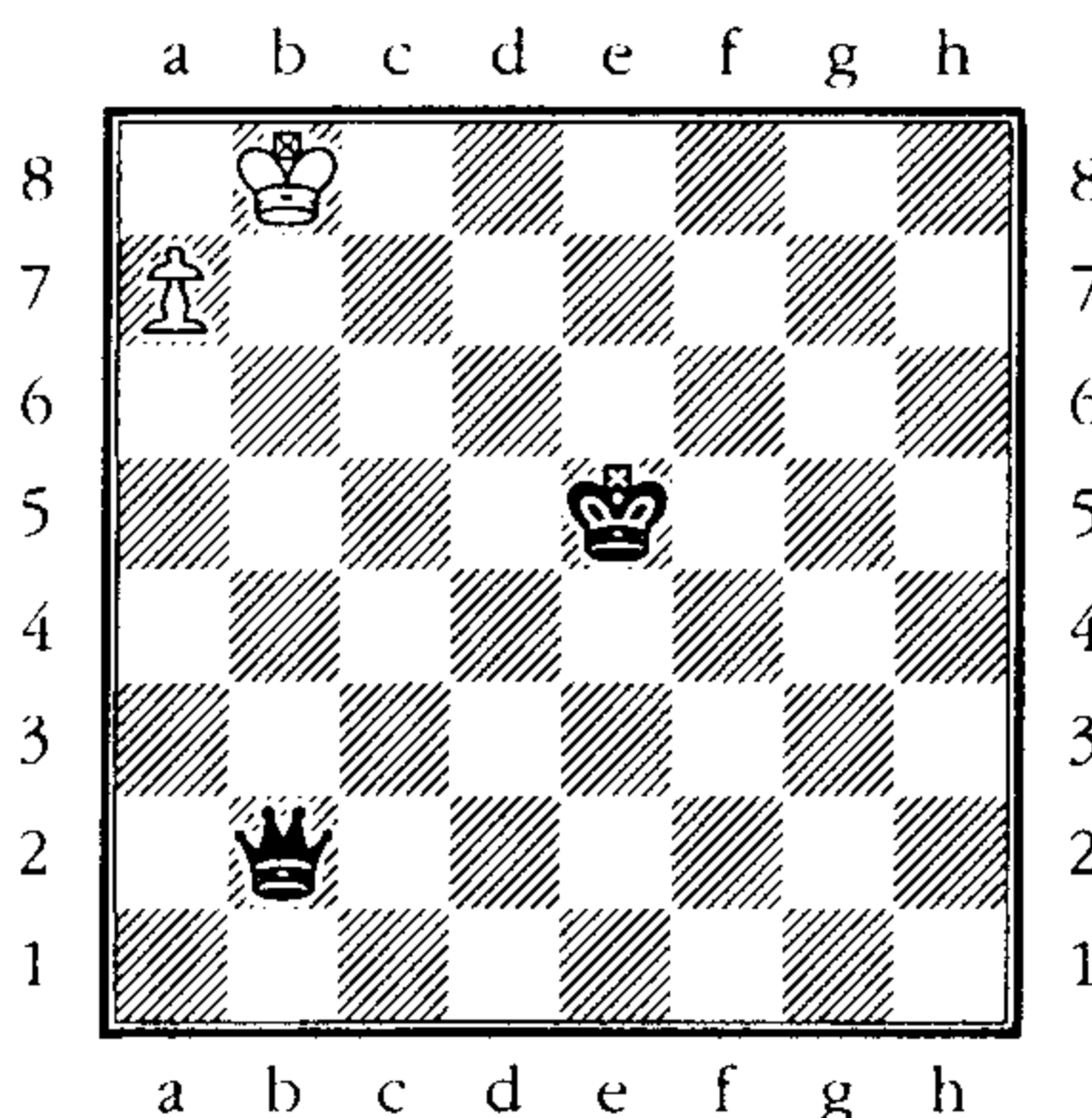


Now the technique fails to:

1 ♔c7 ♕c3+ 2 ♔b7 ♕b4+ 3 ♔c7 ♕c5+ 4 ♔b7 ♕b5+ 5 ♔a8

Due to the possibility of stalemate Black must allow the king to come back to the 'b'-file and threaten to promote, hence the game will end in a draw. The only time this is not the case would be when the black king is close enough to threaten mate, e.g.

1b



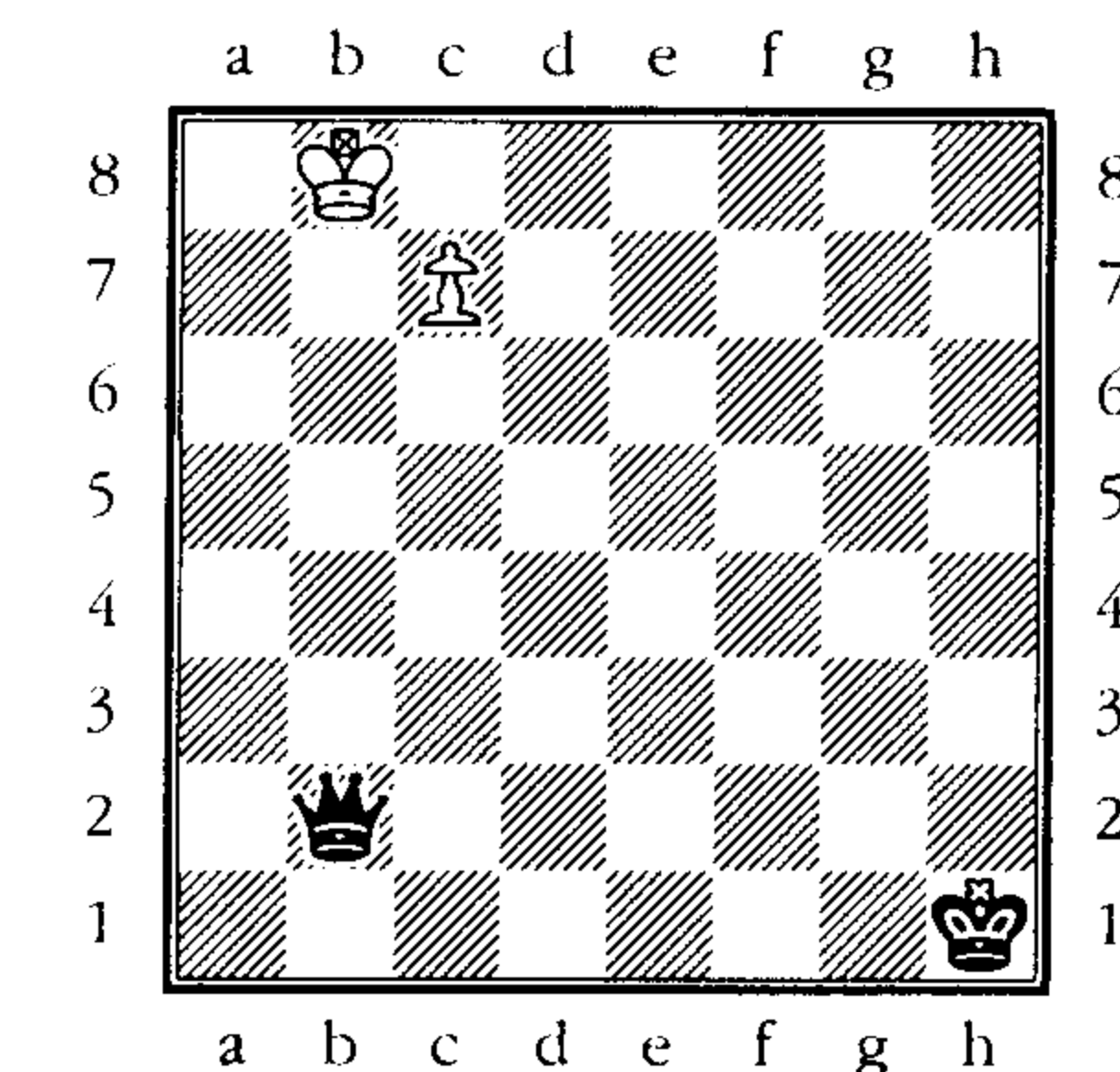
1 ♔c7

After the move 1 ♔a8, aiming for stalemate, Black has 1...♕a3 2 ♔b7 ♕b4+ 3 ♔a8 ♕a5 4 ♔b7 ♔d6! 5 a8=♕ ♕b5+ 6 ♔a7 when White will soon be mated.

1...♕c3+ 2 ♔b7 ♕b4+ 3 ♔c7 ♕c5+ 4 ♔b8 ♔d6 5 a8=♕ ♕c7 mate

The second of these two draws involves a 'c' or 'f'-pawn:

2



Again Black attempts the approaching manoeuvre:

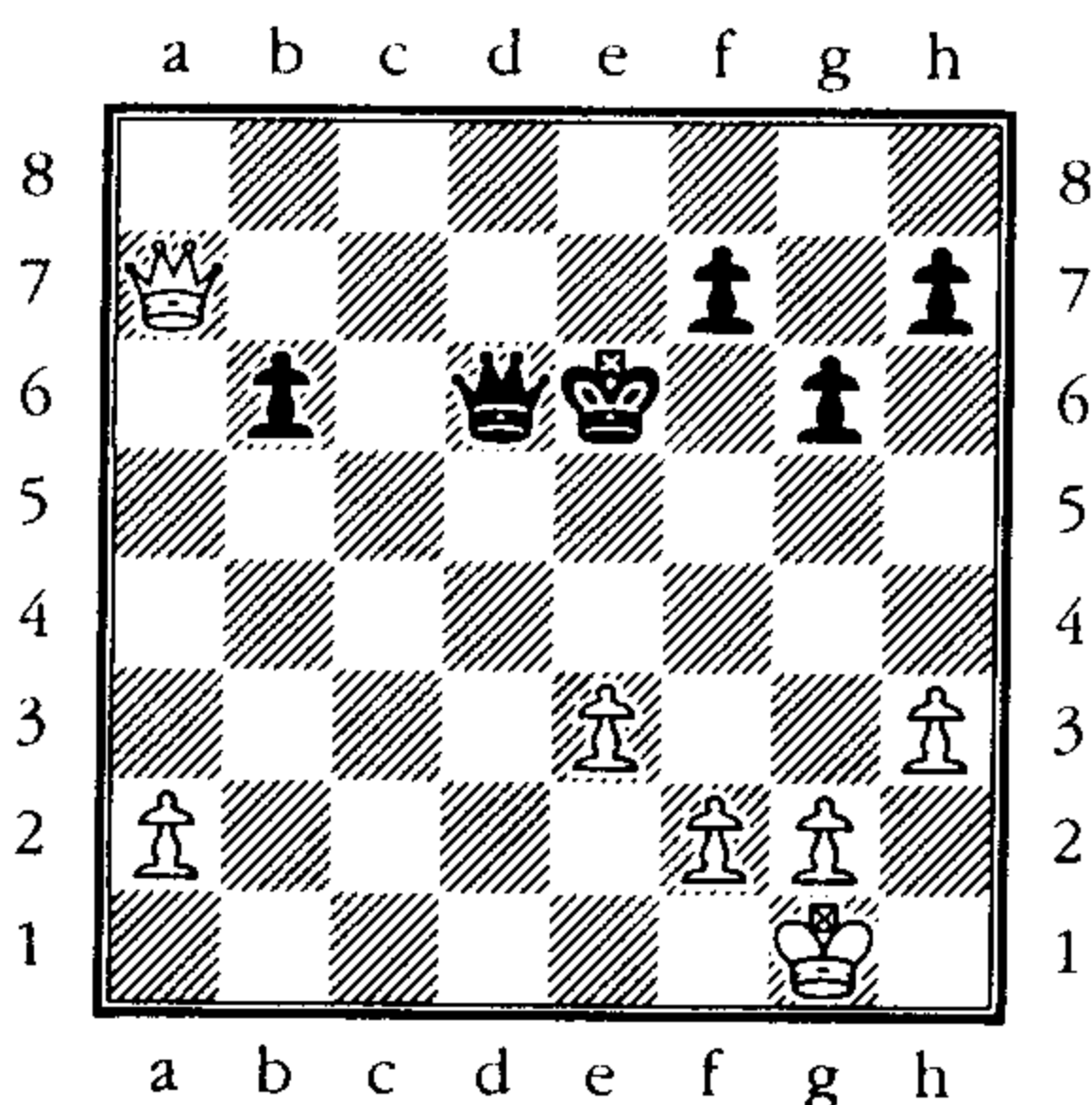
1 ♔a7 ♕a3+ 2 ♔b7 ♕b4+ 3 ♔a7 ♕a5+ 4 ♔b7 ♕b5+ 5 ♔a7 ♕c6 6 ♔b8 ♕b6+ 7 ♔a8!

As the pawn is immune from capture due to stalemate and Black cannot bring his king in since that would also be stalemate, then Black has to let the white king back on to the 'b'-file where it supports the promotion and the game would end in a draw. As with the 'a' or 'h' pawn version, if the aggressor's king is close enough to set up a mate that is another story.

17) Control

Sometimes, by controlling the game and dictating the pace to suit yourself, you can smoothly secure the full point. However, this is not always the case and the mark of the strong player is being able to control the game and 'edge out' the opponent from positions where other people tamely agree to draw or only 'go through the motions'. A player like Grandmaster Keith Arkell makes his living by 'grinding out' his victims in seemingly innocuous middle games and endings—you only have to see the size of his rook and pawn ending book to know he means business! The following example, played in round 5 of the Jersey Open 2002, is a fine example of this principle.

White: M.Fraser
Black: John Hodgson
Jersey Open 2002



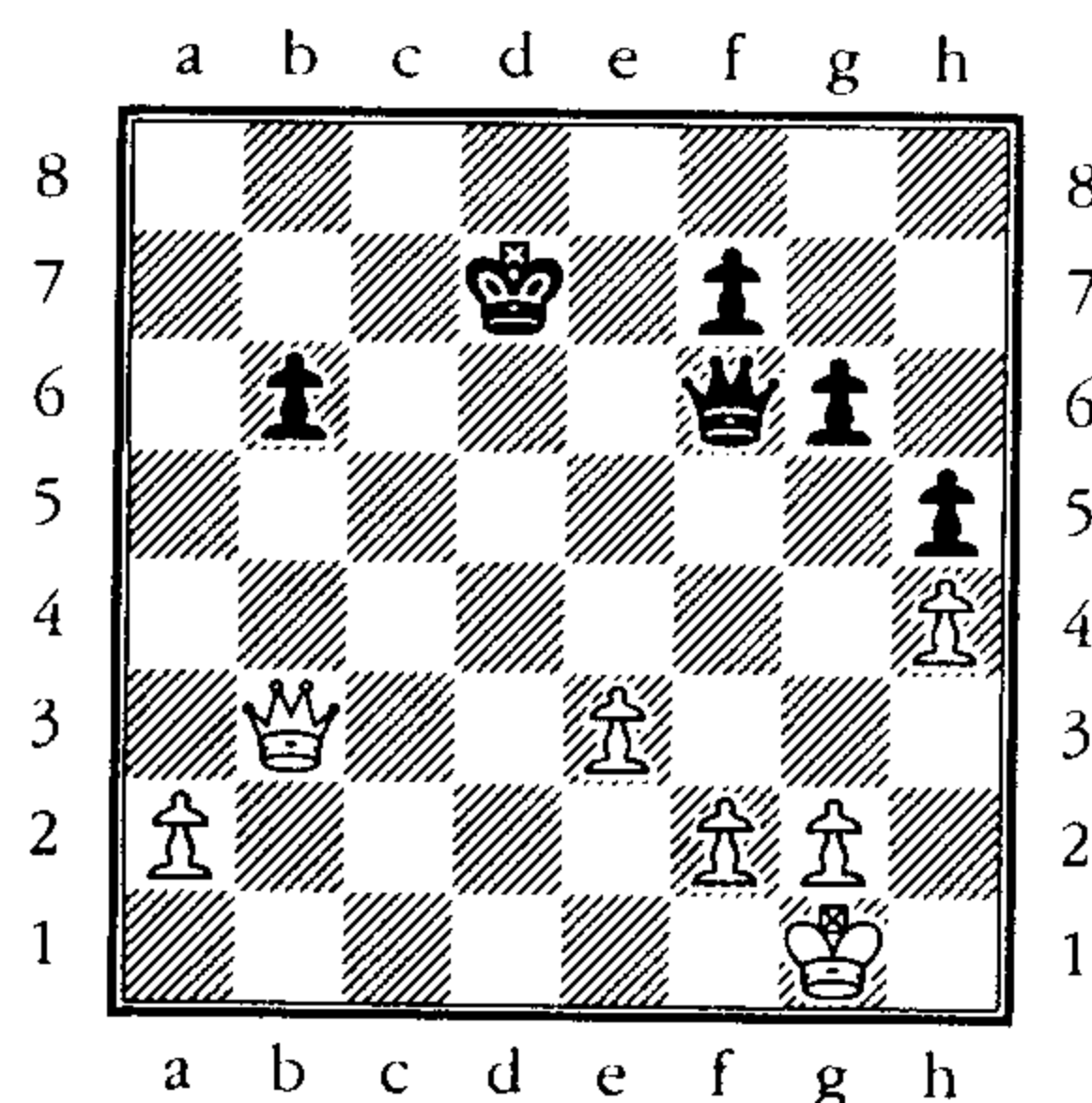
After 34 moves of a Grunfeld Defence, White is a pawn up in a queen and pawn ending but there are real technical difficulties in attempting to force home the advantage. With no passed pawns and little prospect—at least in the

short/medium term—of creating one, White must try to provoke further weaknesses in order to achieve his goal. His one asset is that Black must avoid a pure king and pawn ending where the extra pawn would take its toll.

35 ♖a8 h5

Taking the pawn away from a square on which it could become vulnerable. Also in White's favour is the fact that he can play on and on and on without taking any real risks. If Black could obtain either a perpetual (or some kind of logical perpetual where he could attack one weakness and, when White defends, attack another etc.) then fine, otherwise he must just sit there and suffer. This type of situation exposes a psychological weakness that our 'friends' the silicon chips don't suffer from—well they don't know any better do they?!

36 ♗e8+ ♔f6 37 ♗h8+ ♔e6 38 ♗b2 ♔d7 39 ♗b3 ♗f6 40 h4



Not a lot has happened over the last few moves so White gives his opponent a decision to make—does he really want to exchange off his 'b'-pawn for White's 'h'-pawn and

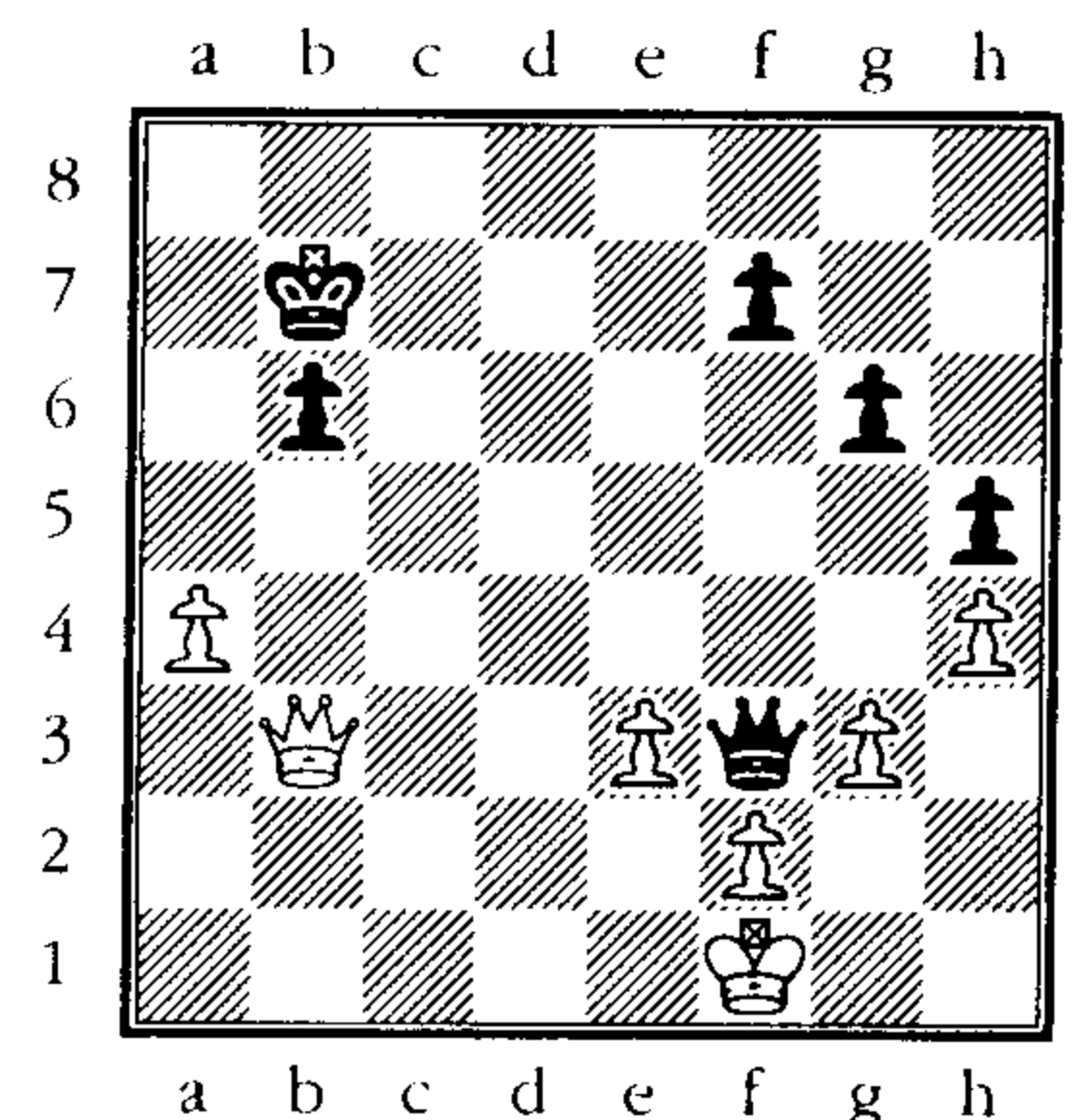
leave White with a passed pawn?—I think not. The move White played has another advantage in that it ties down Black's kingside as he is unlikely to want to play ...g6-g5 as this pawn exchange would leave Black with a weak 'h'-pawn.

40...♔c7 41 g3 ♗f3 42 ♔f1!

White starts to activate his king.

42...♔b7 43 a4

Black now has to decide how to handle the threat of a4-a5, either he has to move his king or put his queen on the fourth rank.



43...♗f5

The wrong decision. A passive defence with 43...♔c7 44 ♔e1 ♔c6 45 ♗b5+ ♔c7 should draw on the grounds that, after 46 a5 bxa5 47 ♗xa5+ ♔d7 48 ♗e5, White isn't going to get in ♗f4+ to swap off to a king and pawn ending, and if he plays ♗f4 when it isn't check then Black can play ...♗f3-h1+ and then defend his 'f'-pawn with his king. So White's only plan is to attempt to advance his 'e'-pawn—but it is difficult to believe that this should be winning, although I suspect that White would have a go!

44 ♔e1 ♔a7 45 ♗b5 ♗f3 46 a5 bxa5 47 ♗xa5+ ♔b7 48 ♗c5!

With the black king cut off on the queenside White can attempt to make further progress.

48...♗f6 49 ♗b5+

Not necessary. White should have played 49 ♔e2 and then start advancing by e3-e4. It is unlikely that Black can find any perpetual and sooner or later he is going to feel the strain.

49...♔c8 50 ♗c5+ ♔b7

Black has to go back to the 'b'-file as he cannot afford to enter the king and pawn ending by moving to the 'd'-file and allowing ♗c5-d4+.

51 ♗d4 ♗f5 52 ♔e2 ♔c8 53 e4!

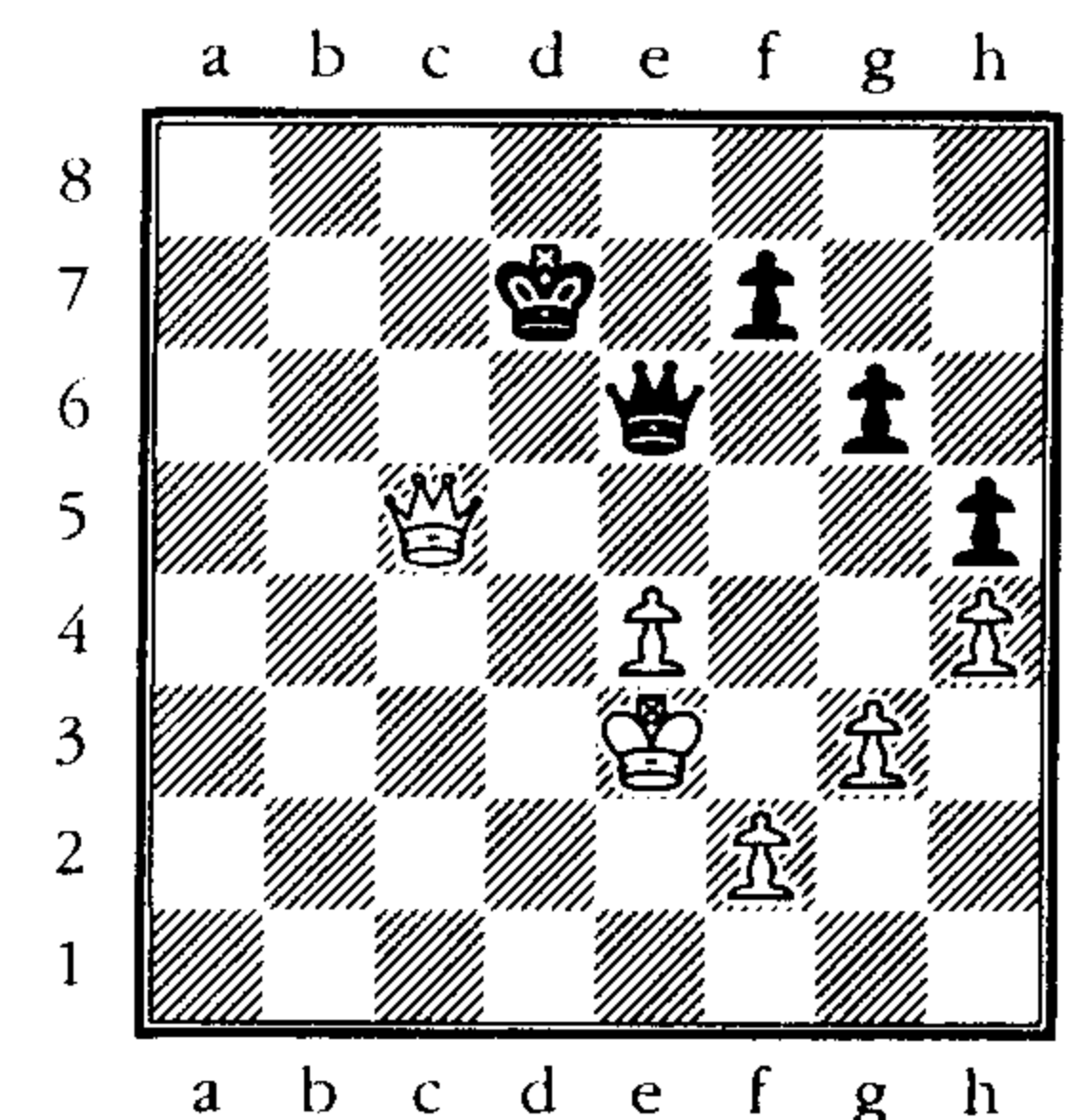
White starts to make progress.

53...♗e6

53...♗g4+ 54 ♔e3 doesn't help Black's cause—he cannot even try 54...g5 because of 55 ♗c5+ followed by ♗c5xg5.

54 ♗c5+ ♔d7 55 ♔e3

For the first time the king and pawn ending is not winning as the black king will eat the pawn after 55 ♗d5+?? ♗xd5 56 exd5 ♔d6.



55...♖b3+?

The losing move, the problem being that it allows White to make a fatal penetration on the kingside. Black should have played his king to e8 to see how White planned to make further progress.

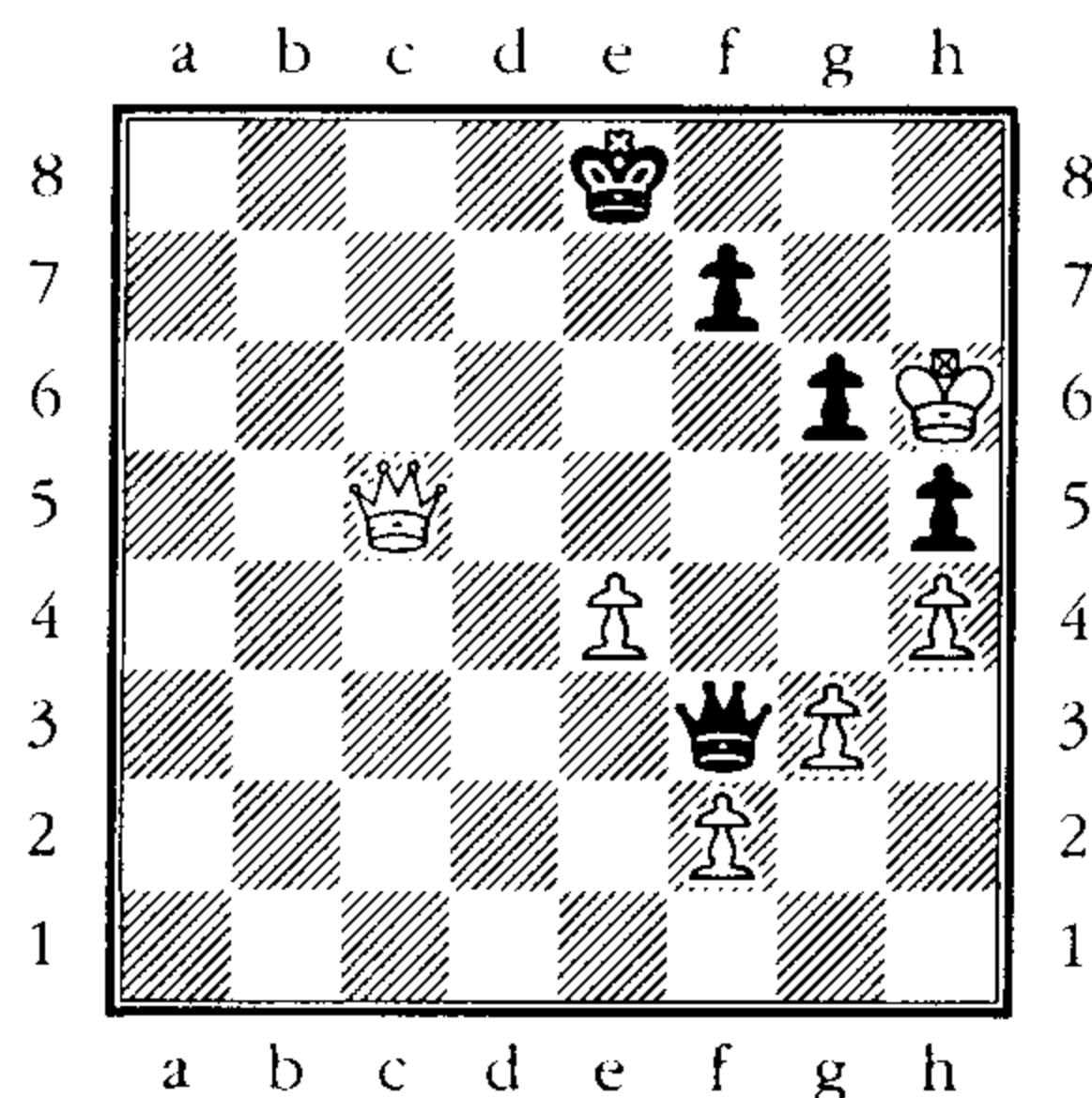
56 ♔f4 ♕e8 57 ♕g5!

Now, should the king be able to get to f6, White would threaten mate on e7 and, should Black check on b2, it would allow the exchange of queens after ♖c5-e5+. And if Black checks on f3 White can play ♔f6-g7, threatening ♖c5-f8+xf7, when Black's kingside will fall apart.

57...♖f3

Black attempts to stop the white king from getting to g7.

58 ♕h6!



White takes the other route.

58...♖xe4 59 ♕g7

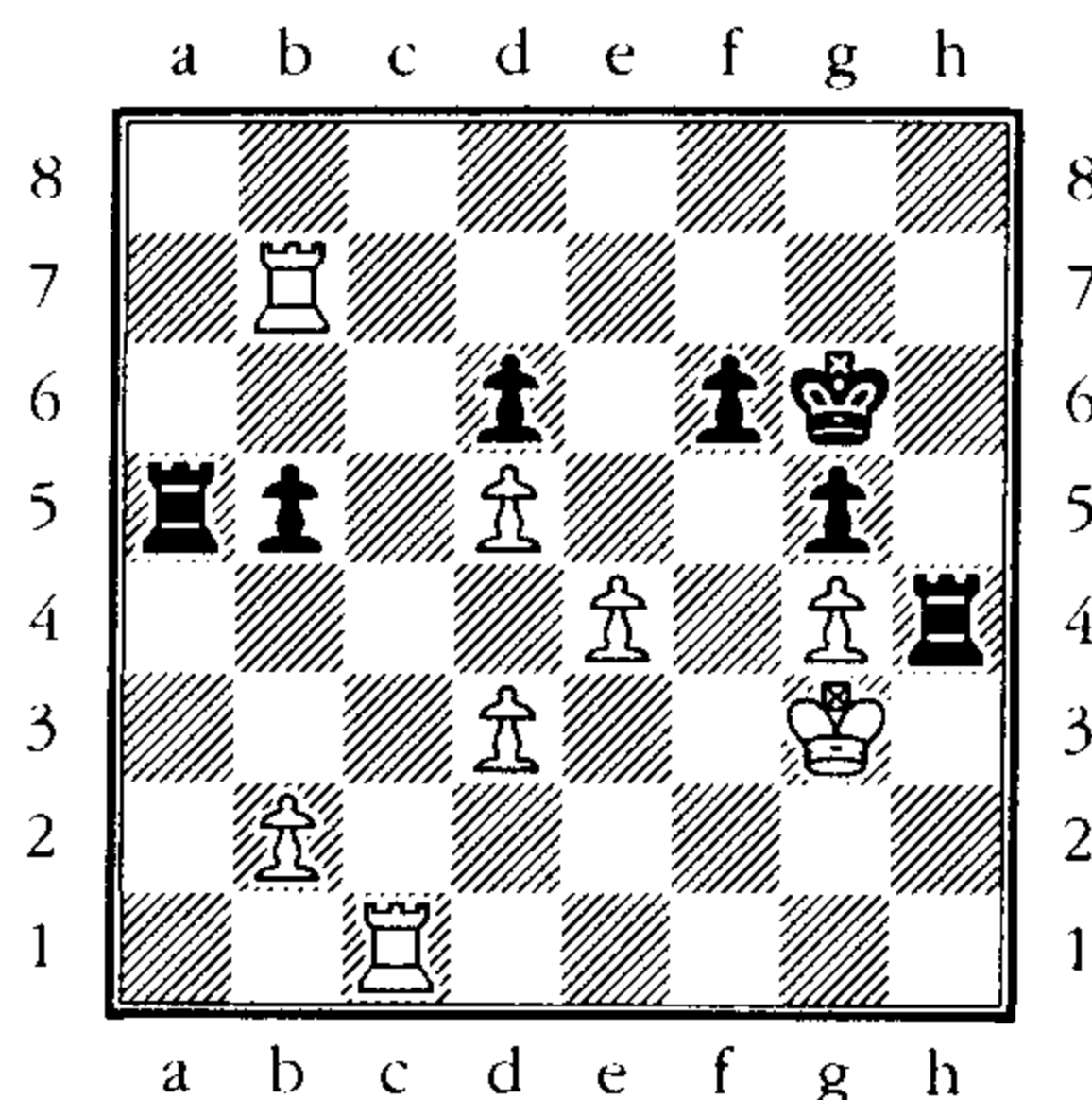
Despite having reached ♖+3♗'s each, Black is busted as his kingside pawns are ripe for plucking.

59...♕d7 60 ♖a7+ ♕d6 61 ♖xf7 g5 1-0

Capitulation. Black resigned without waiting to see his opponent's reply.

From the same round of the same tournament we have another fine example of a player seeking to keep things totally under his control. We join the position after White's 44th move:

White: Kevin Thurlow
Black: G. Keeling
Jersey Open 2002



Here White is obviously well placed. He is a pawn ahead and has the safer king and, what is more, Black's pawn on d6 is a source of weakness. Having said this, Black puts up stiff resistance and it is only by careful play and keeping control that White manages to succeed. Black already has a major decision to make: should he exchange off a pair of rooks and enter the rook and pawn ending or go for activity and attempt to mix it? For example: 44...♖a8 45 ♖cc7 (Black has some hope after 45 ♖xb5 ♖ah8 46 ♕f3 ♖h3+ 47 ♕e2 ♖g3 due to the activity of his rooks) 45...♖ah8 46 ♖g7+ ♕h6 47 ♖b4 ♖h1 48 ♖gd7 ♕g6 49

♕f2! (attempting to hide on d4) 49...♖b1! 50 ♕e3 ♖xb4 and Black has generated sufficient counterplay to make White's life awkward. So, due to the level of control that White has in the game after the exchange of a pair of rooks, I think Black would have been well advised to 'chance his arm' with 44...♖a8.

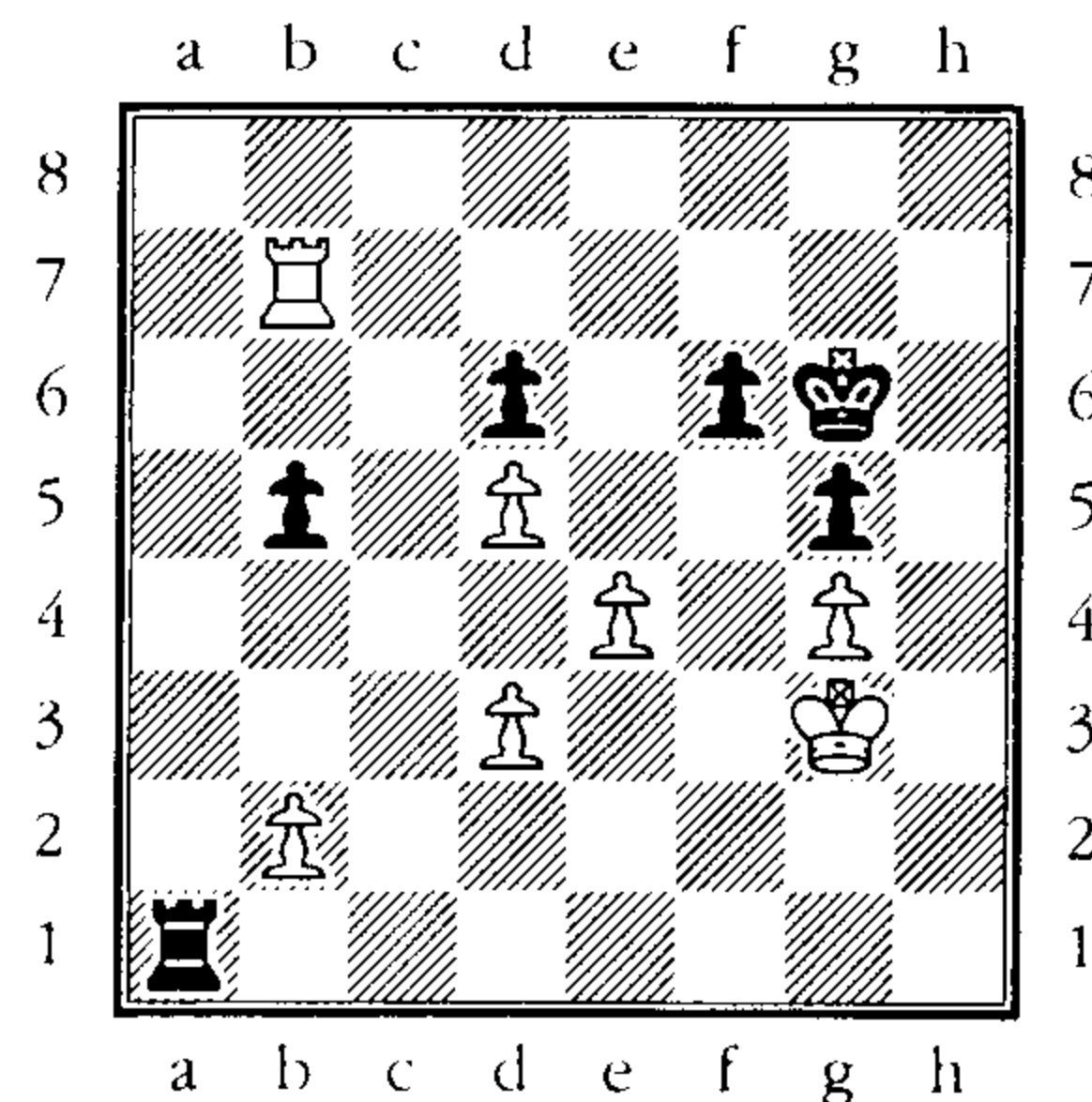
44...♖h7 45 ♖xh7

The alternative to exchanging is 45 ♖b6 when, rather than go passive with 45...♖d7, Black should again try to activate his pair of rooks with 45...♖a2. The deciding factor was probably the element of control he would get from going into the rook and pawn ending, together with the minimising of any risk of things 'going pear shaped'.

45...♕xh7 46 ♖c7+

After 46 ♖c6 ♖a2, 47 ♖xd6 ♕g7 (47...♕g6?? 48 e5) 48 ♖d7+ ♕f8 49 ♕f3 ♖xb2 is obviously better for White but not necessarily totally conclusive—and as he has a 'safe' way to proceed he decides not to commit himself prematurely.

46...♕g6 47 ♖b7 ♖a1!



Rather than adopt a 'wait and see' policy Black correctly decides to

activate his rook, especially as White's pawns on d3 and g4 are a potential source of weakness.

48 ♖xb5 ♖d1 49 ♖b3!

There is no rush. While forming a plan, White protects the pawn on d3. Black, on the other hand, cannot improve his king position or pawn structure.

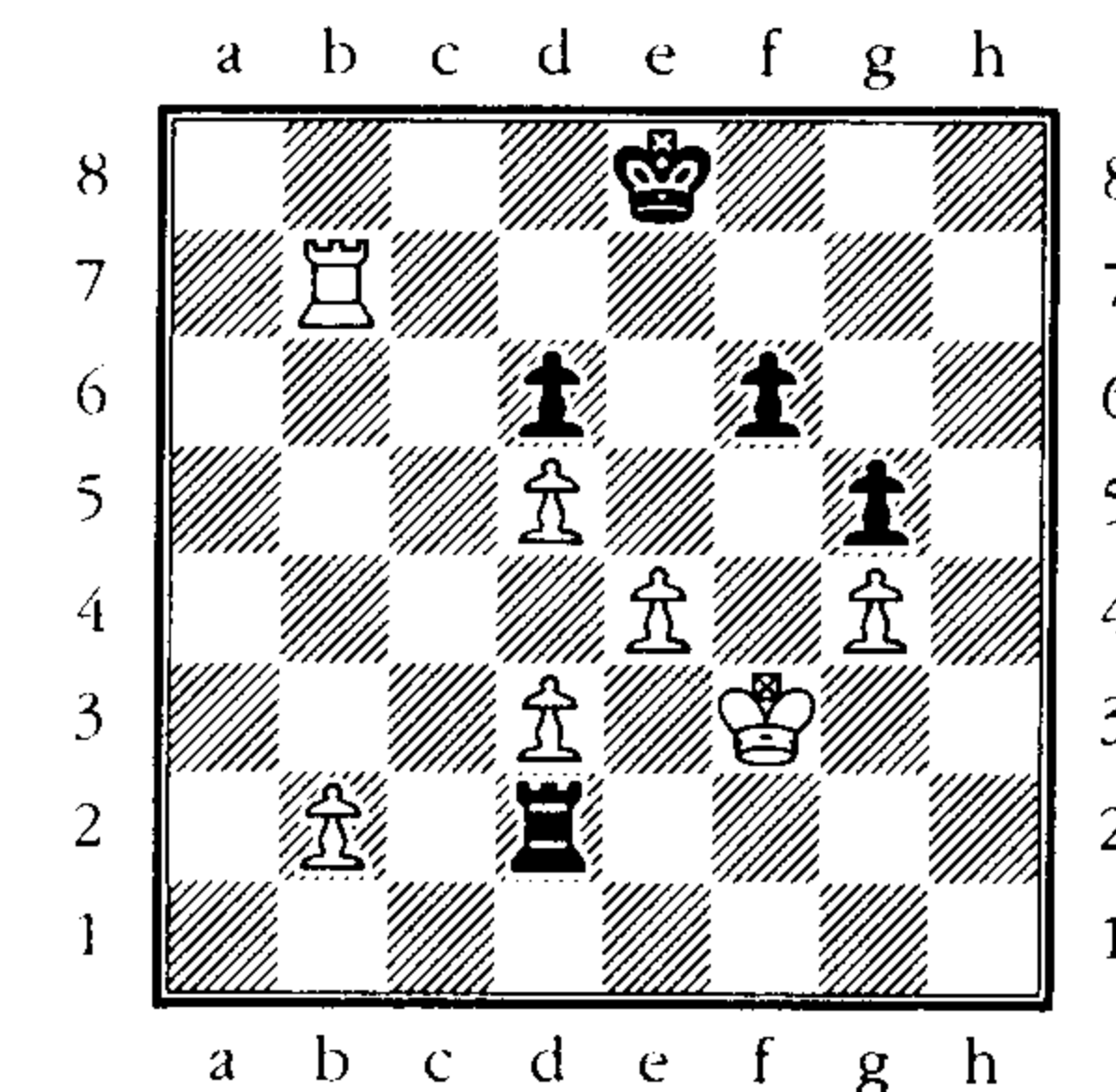
49...♖g1+ 50 ♕f3 ♖f1+ 51 ♕g2 ♖d1 52 ♕f2 ♖d2+ 53 ♕f3

This triangulation suits White's purpose. With Black's rook posted on its best square he has little choice but to move his king.

53...♕f7

53...♕h6, which prevents White gaining a tempo with check, has the downside of leaving the 'f6'-pawn unprotected.

54 ♖b7+ ♕e8



If White now protects the 'd'-pawn with 55 ♕e3 Black will then hit the 'g'-pawn with 55...♖g2, so White must make a choice—which pawn to give up? The deciding factors are (a) by giving up the 'g'-pawn Black will have a passed pawn himself and so there is a certain amount of danger involved and

(b) whether it matters which pawn White surrenders in respect of his being able to penetrate with his king. It is this second factor that is of the greatest relevance—for example, put White's king on e6 and see how long Black would survive. With this in mind White should assess the real risk involved in surrendering the 'g'-pawn as with this off the board his king has a potential entry point into Black's guts via g4-f5-e6.

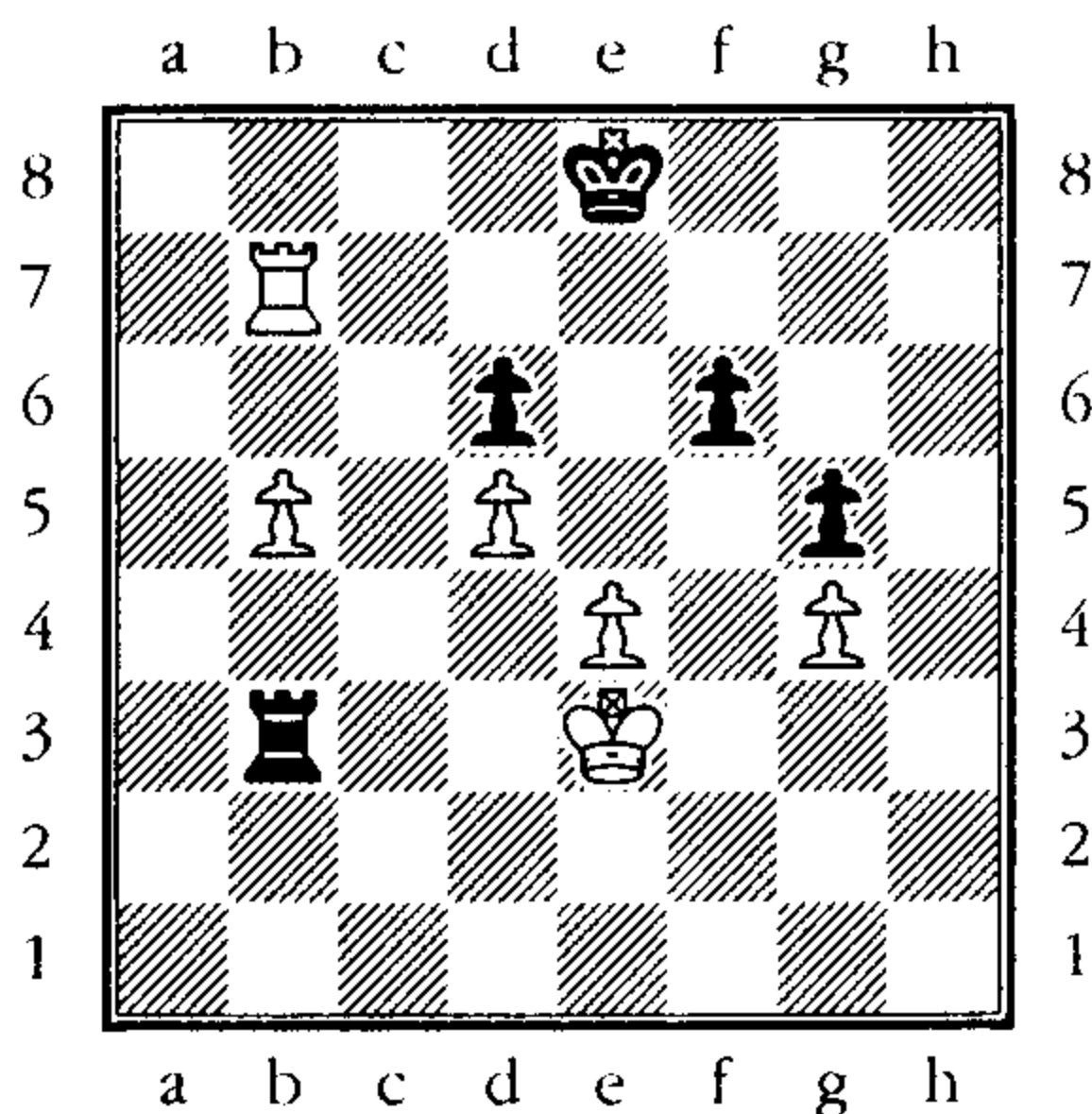
55 b4?!

As the following analysis shows it was perfectly safe and in fact best to surrender the 'g'-pawn instead: 55 ♖e3 ♜g2 56 b4 ♜xg4 57 b5 ♜g1 (57...f5, while desirable, is too slow after 58 exf5 ♜f4 59 b6 ♜xf5 60 ♜h7 and the 'b'-pawn is going to cost Black his rook) 58 b6 ♜b1 59 ♖f3 ♜b3 60 ♖g4 ♜xd3 61 ♖f5

55...♜xd3+ 56 ♖f2 ♜d2+ 57 ♖e3 ♜g2 58 ♖f3 ♜b2 59 b5

White has made a little progress in that his 'b'-pawn is one rank further ahead but Black's rook is still well placed and continues to be a nuisance.

59...♜b3+ 60 ♖f2 ♜b2+ 61 ♖e3 ♜b3+



62 ♖e2

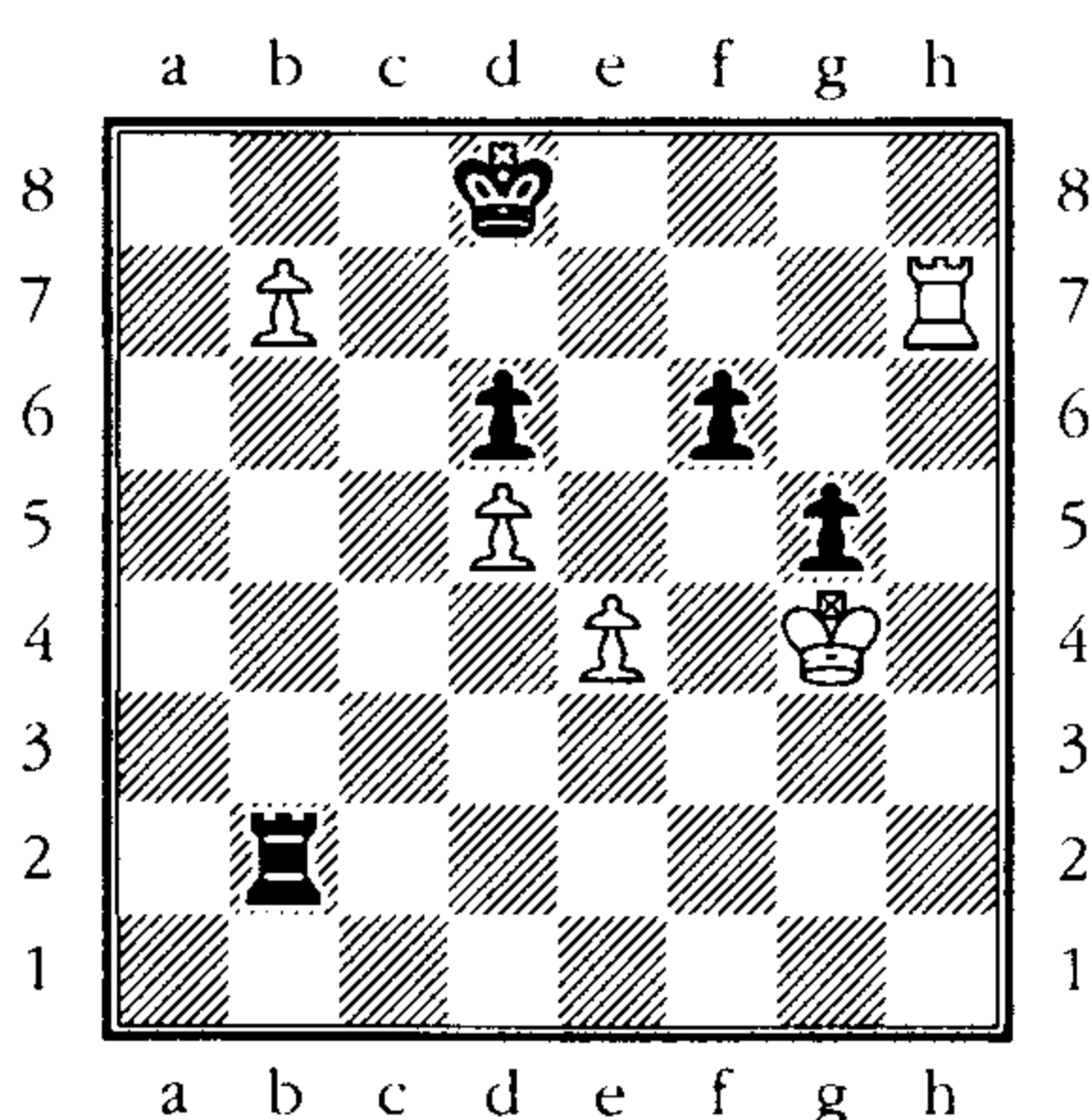
While still good enough, 62 ♖d2 is a stronger move in that if Black continues with his plan of 'gobbling up' the 'g'-pawn he will come unstuck, i.e. 62...♜g3 63 b6 ♜xg4

a) 64 ♜e7+?! doesn't quite 'cut the mustard' after 64...♖xe7 65 b7 ♜xe4 66 b8=♚ ♜d4+ 67 ♖e3 ♜xd5 since White will have great problems 'forcing' the win, especially as the position is now drawn!

b) 64 ♜h7—the main difference between this position and the equivalent one in the game is that Black no longer has the manoeuvre ...♜g2+-b2 as White can reply to the check with ♖d2-c3, which stops the rook from coming to the 'b'-file—64...♜xe4 65 b7 and once more the pawn is Black's downfall.

62...♜g3 63 b6 ♜xg4 64 ♜h7 ♜g2+ 65 ♖f3 ♜b2 66 b7 ♖d8 67 ♖g4!

Black has almost 'done White a favour' by taking the 'g'-pawn, although he had little choice as he had to do something. Now the white king can penetrate with devastating effect.



67...♜g2+ 68 ♖f5 ♜f2+ 69 ♖e6 ♜b2

Black's position now falls apart.

70 ♖xf6

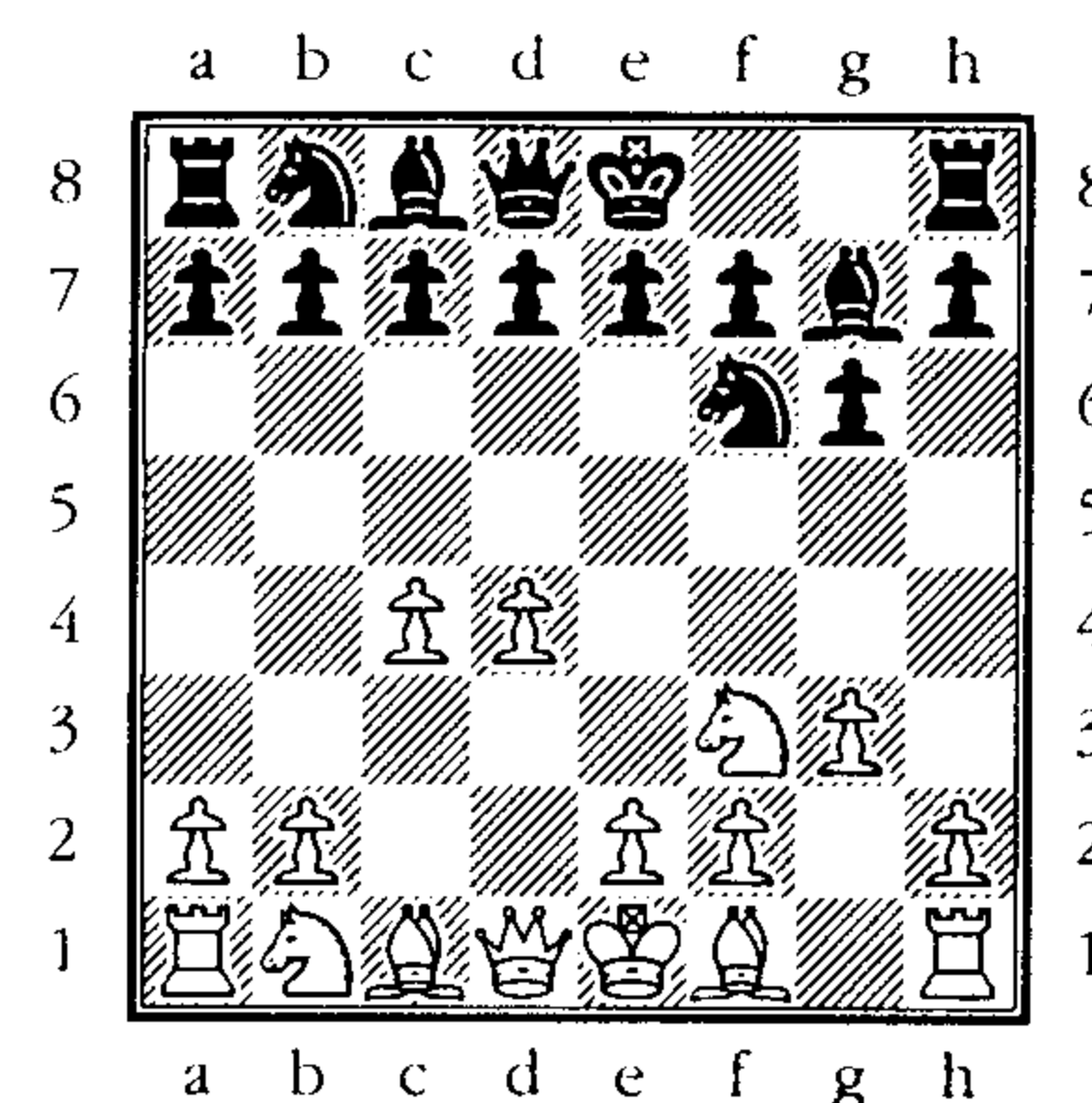
Even quicker is 70 ♜d7+! ♖e8 71 ♜c7 which finishes things off.

70...g4 71 ♖e6 g3 72 ♜g7 g2 73 ♜xg2! ♜xb7 74 ♜g8+ 1-0

The rooks are exchanged and the 'd'-pawn drops as well. It all goes to show how important the 'control' factor is. White missed easier opportunities and Black played the ending to the best of his ability and yet never really looked like salvaging the half point he craved so much. The next game demonstrates such a high level of control throughout, against a world class player, that it deserves to be given in full.

White: Keith Arkell
Black: Pia Cramling
French League,
Strasbourg 1999

1 d4 ♖f6 2 ♖f3 g6 3 c4 ♖g7 4 g3



This move tends to lead to a quieter type of position than do the

main lines following 4 ♖c3 and 5 e4 and is therefore more in keeping with Keith's style.

4...0-0 5 ♖g2 d6 6 0-0 c6

Black can also choose to play 6...♖c6, which is the Panov and a favourite of Mark Hebden, or 6...♖bd7, aiming for an ...e7-e5 central thrust.

7 ♖c3 ♜a5

Supporting...e7-e5.

8 e4 e5 9 d5

White closes the centre and gains space.

9...cxd5 10 cxd5 b5 11 ♜e1

11 ♖d2 is more usual here when White can meet 11...b4 with either 12 ♖b3 or 12 ♖cb1. But instead White chooses a different method.

11...b4 12 ♖b1 ♖bd7

12...♖a6 was played in Kittler-Paschall, Budapest 1997, which was eventually drawn in 89 moves.

13 ♖bd2 ♖a6 14 ♖b3

Black's queen has no quiet resting-place.

14...♜a4 15 a3! ♖c4 16 ♖fd2

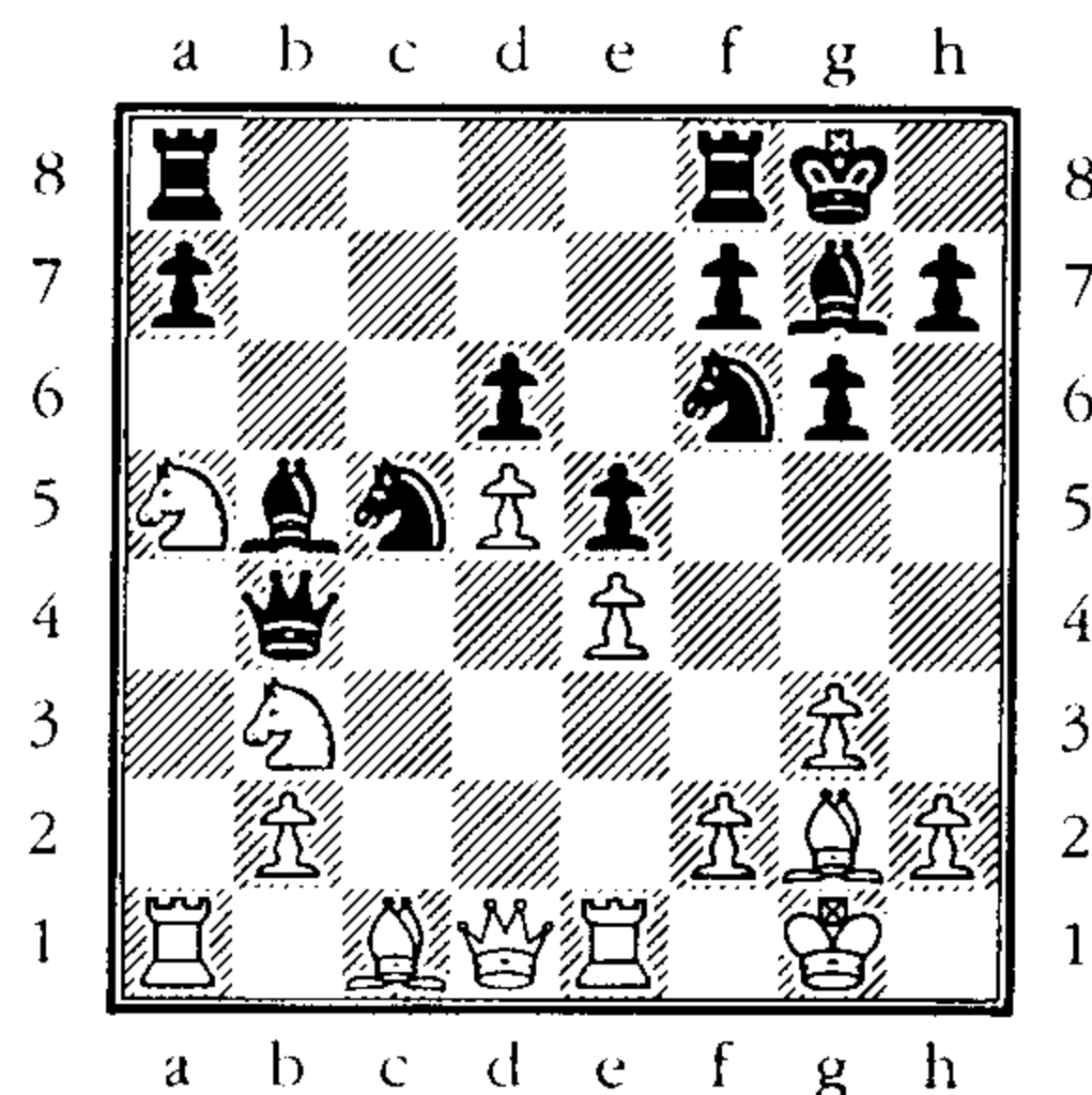
Black doesn't wish to concede the bishop pair (we will see exactly why later on in the game, as it is a re-occurring theme) and so takes a retrograde step.

16...♖b5 17 axb4 ♜xb4 18 ♖a5

At a suitable moment, White would love to occupy the c6 square with his knight, especially if there was an exchange of light-squared bishops.

18...♖c5 19 ♖db3

White looks for exchanges so that his extra space might yield some advantage.



19...dxb3

Black had some interesting alternatives available, i.e.

a) 19...dfe4 20 e4xe4 dxe4 21 f3 causes a problem as 21...dc5 22 ed2 wins material.

Which is also why

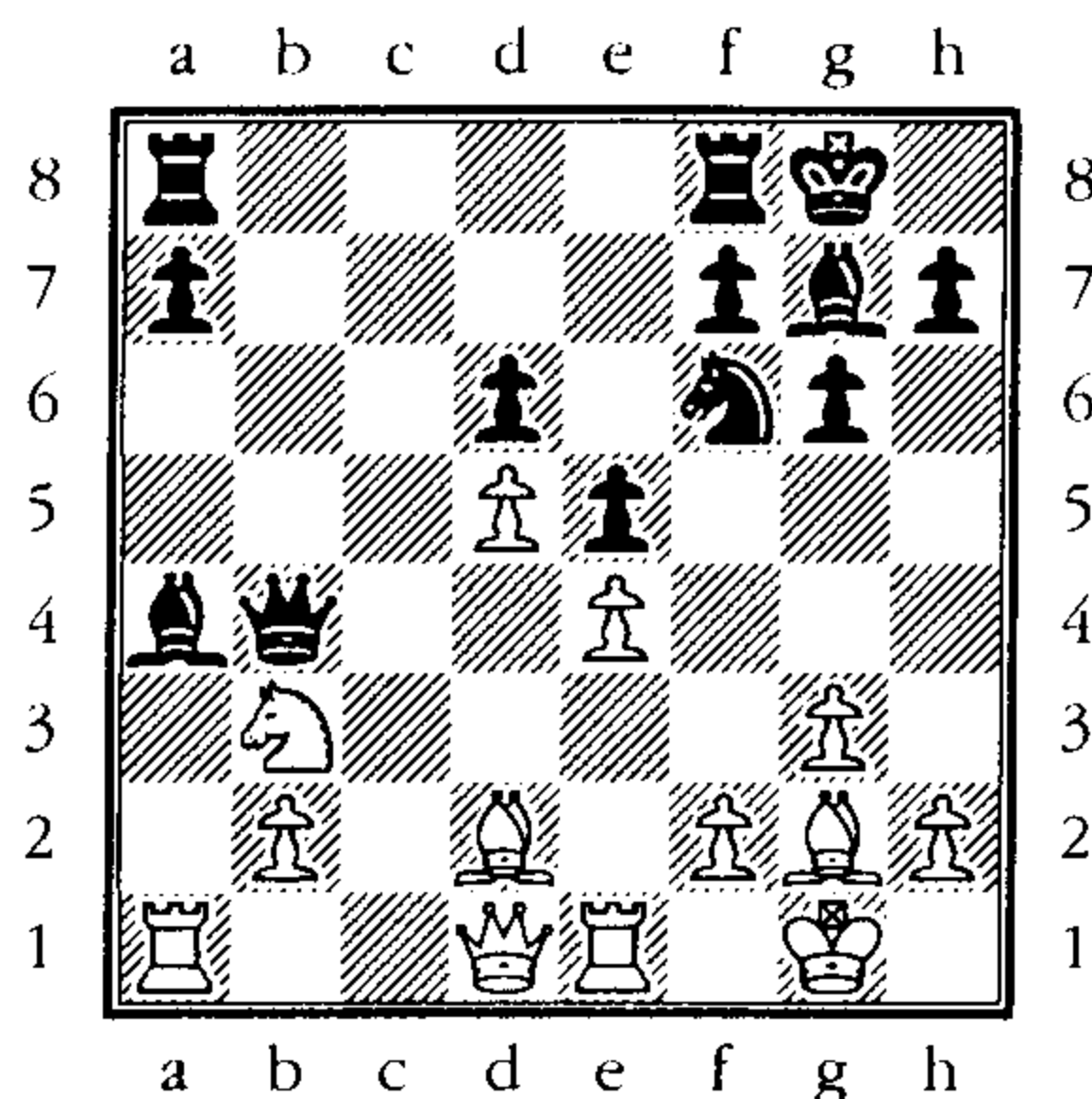
b) 19...d3 doesn't help Black's cause, i.e. 20 ed2 and again Black will have to shed material to save her queen.

c) 19...ea4 20 wd2! and after the exchange of queens White obtains a positional plus, e.g. 20...wd2 21 dxd2 d3 (21...f8 22 ddc4 d3 23 f1 dxc1 24 fxc1 h6 25 e1 and Black's position is awkward) 22 f1 b5 23 ddc4 and Black must 'back peddle' e.g. 23...fd8 24 d1 dc5 25 f3!, supporting the centre, 25...ab8 (25...db3 26 dxb3 xc4 27 da5 e2 28 d2 b5 29 h3! controlling the c8 square gives White the edge) 26 e3 db3 27 xa7 a8 28 dxb3 xc4 29 dd2 and White is in a strong position.

20 dxb3

20 wxb3?? is a disaster after 20...we1+ with mate next move.

20...ea4 21 ed2!



21...wxb3

Better than either

a) 21...xb3 22 xb4 xd1 23 exd1 which leaves White with the bishop pair and more space—and Black still with the 'weakling' on d6;

or

b) 21...wb5 22 d4! wxb2 (22...exd4 23 xa4 wxb2 24 b4 wa3 25 xd4 and, on top of his other advantages, Black will again find it difficult to cope with White's bishops in the long-term) 23 xa4 exd4 24 b4 which transposes to the previous note in brackets.

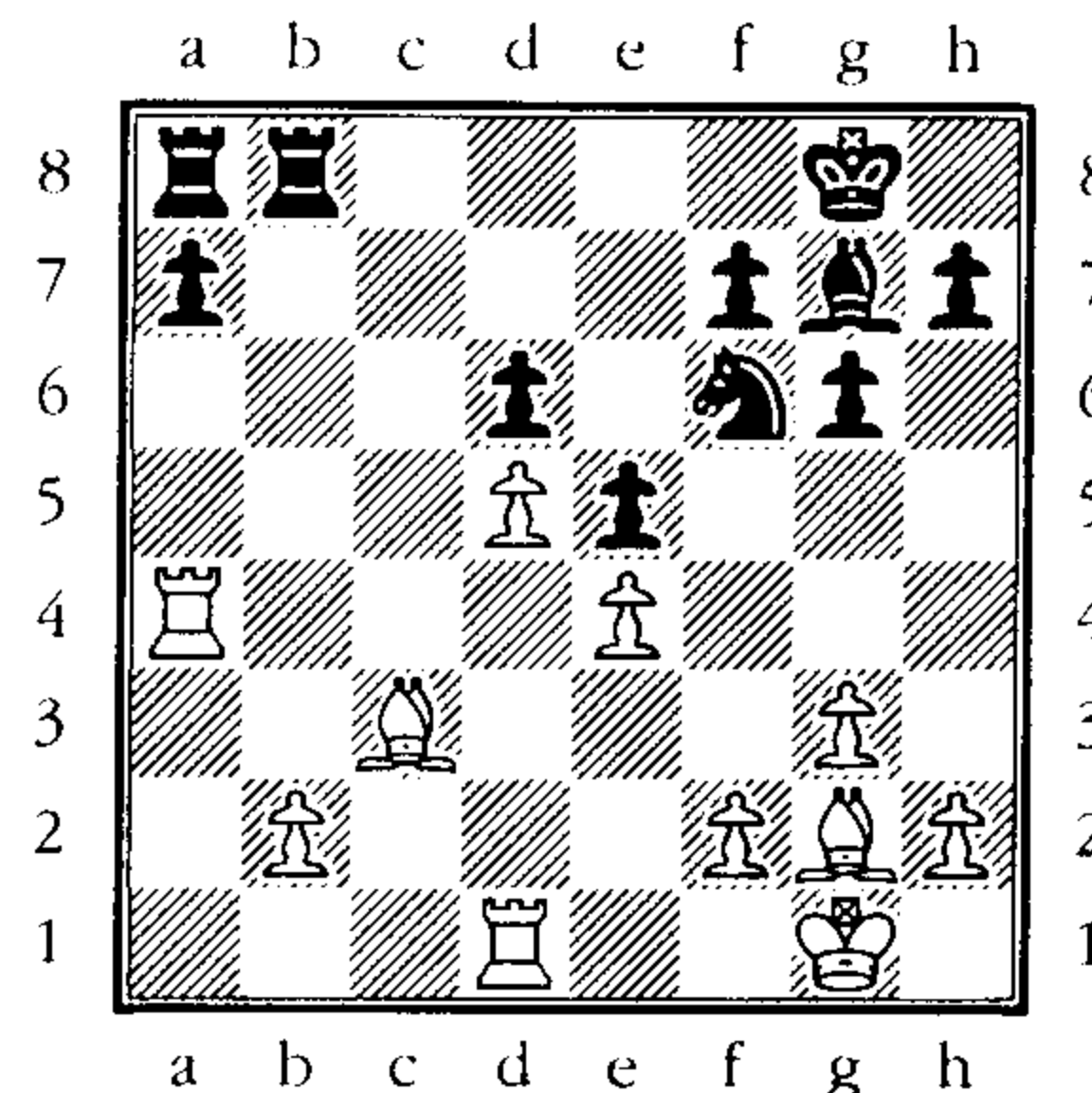
22 xa4 fb8

After the capture with 22...wxb2 White has 23 b4! and now:

a) 23...fd8 24 e2! wd4 25 d2 wb6 (25...wc4 26 xd6) 26 ea5 winning the exchange.

b) 23...de8 24 wa1 wc2 (24...wxa1 25 exa1 b8 26 d2 and Black's 'a'-pawn will fall.) 25 c1—and by 'kicking' the Black queen all over the board White maintains an edge, e.g. 25...we2 26 c6 f5 27 a2 wg4 28 h3 wg5 29 xa7.

23 c3 wxd1 24 exd1



Now we will see how a master of positional play handles the bishop pair and more space. The bishop on c3 leaves Black cramped, struggling to generate any real counterplay.

24...d7 25 da1 b7 26 a6 ef8 27 b4

Having tied down the black rooks and bishop, White endeavours to make his 'b'-pawn a thorn in Black's side.

27...db6 28 ee1

Stopping Black from gaining a tempo by hitting the bishop with one of his rooks.

28...eh6 29 ef1

By going to h3 with the bishop White would control the h3-c8 diagonal; by going to f1 he has plans of putting it on c6.

29...c8

After 29...f5? 30 exf5 gxf5 31 b5 causes Black too many headaches.

30 eb5

Now 30 exa7?! undoes all White's hard work after 30...xa7 31 xa7 c1! 32 b7 da4 33 a7 db6 with a draw.

30...c1 31 c6 xa1 32 xa1

The exchange of rooks has relieved some of the pressure, especially down the 'a'-file, but Black's remaining rook is not a great piece.

32...c7 33 b5 dc4 34 a2!

Stopping a black minor piece coming to d2.

34...f5 35 eb4 ef8

After 35...fxe4? 36 c2 db6 37 xd6 is crushing.

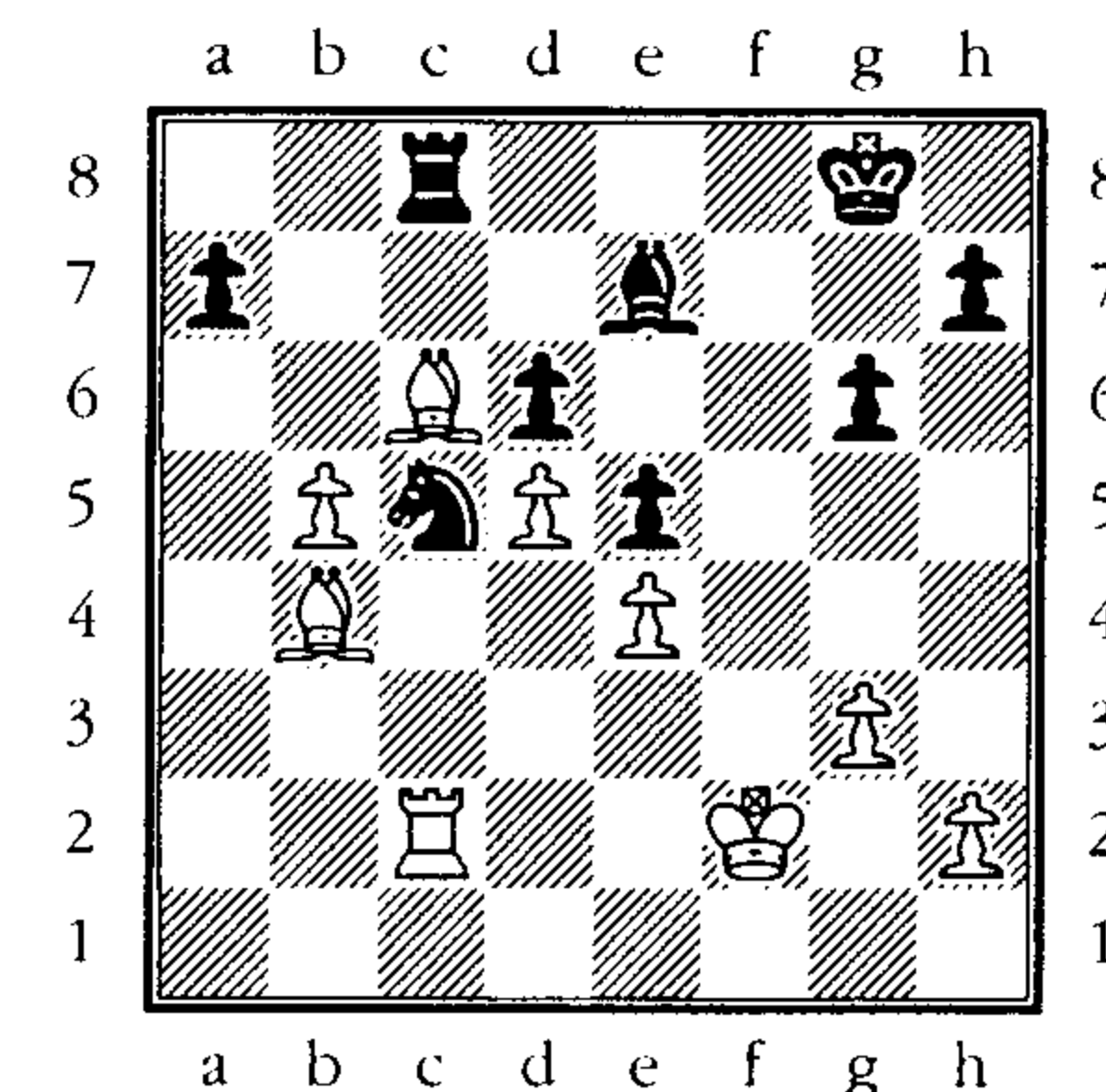
36 c2 db6 37 f3

Securing the centre.

37...fxe4 38 fxe4 ee7 39 cf2 d7 40 ea5 c8

Utilising the pin down the 'c'-file.

41 eb4 dc5



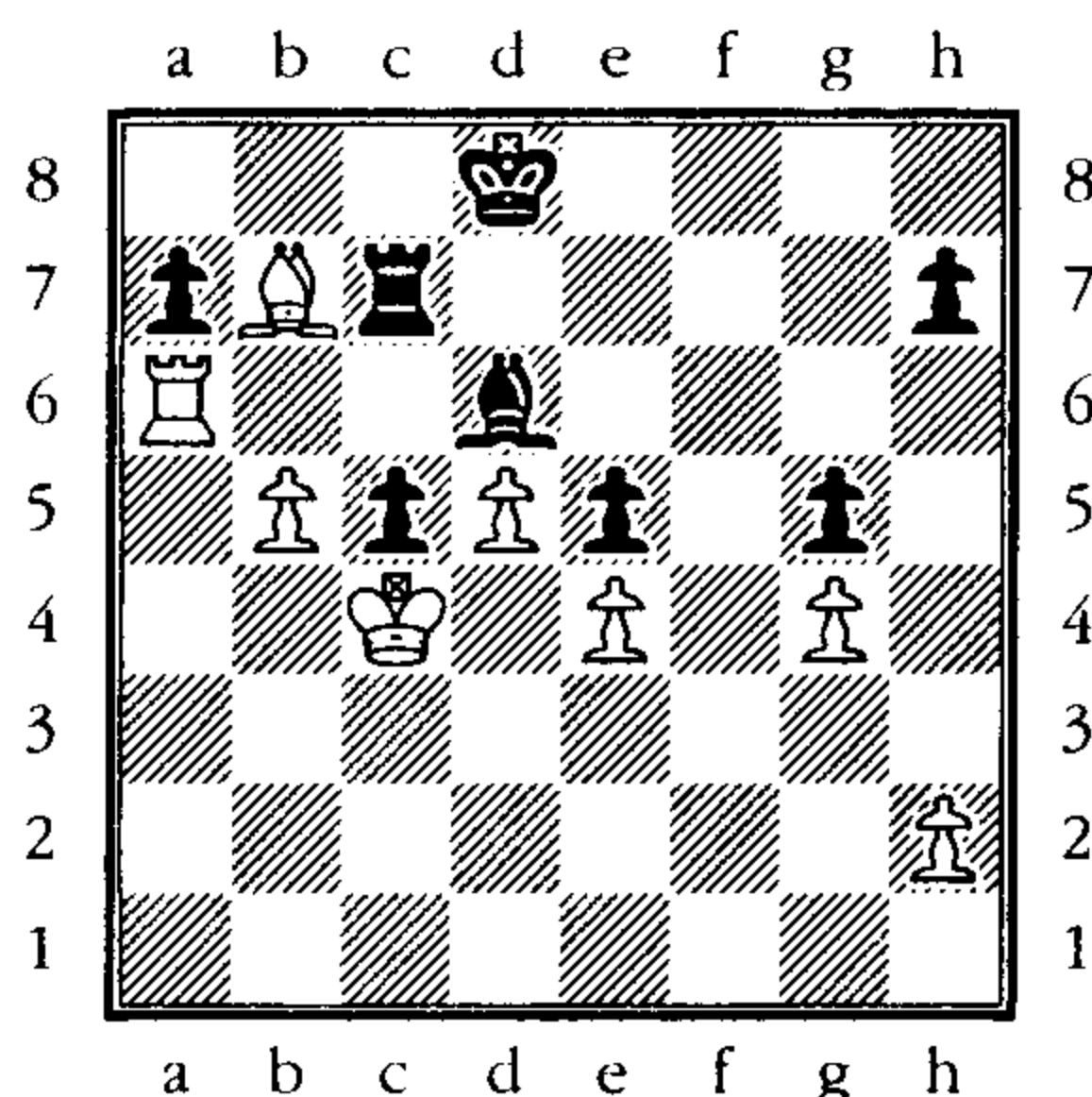
42 ♔xc5!

Excellent judgement, ensuring that the knight doesn't become too active. White enters the opposite-coloured bishops ending knowing that his advantages in the position will be enough to secure the win.

42...dxc5 43 ♖a2 ♜c7 44 ♔e2

Now White starts a manoeuvre to put his king on a more active square where it will also stop Black's passed pawn from advancing.

44...♗d6 45 ♔d3 ♔f8 46 ♔c4 ♔e7 47 g4 g5 48 ♖a6 ♔d8 49 ♗b7!!



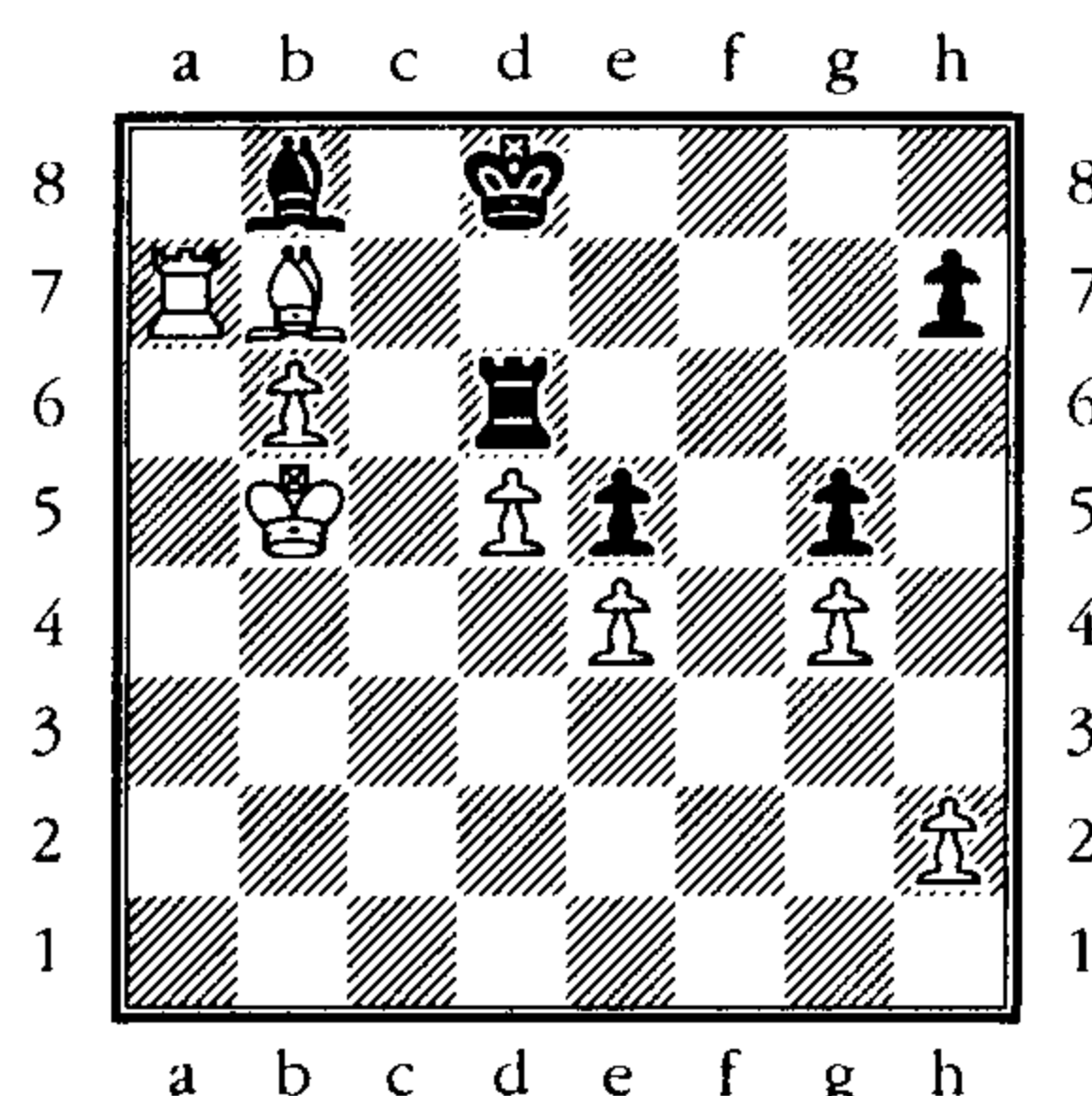
Offering the chance for Black to enter a hopeless rook and pawn ending by 49...♖xb7 50 ♜xd6+ ♔e7 51 ♜e6+ ♔d7 52 ♜xe5 h6 53 ♜e6 when the pawns drop like ripe melons and Black is unable to activate her rook.

49...♜d7 50 ♜xa7! ♗b8 51 b6

Black cannot afford to take the rook and so resistance is now limited.

51...♜f7 52 ♔xc5 ♜d7 53 ♔c6 ♜d6+ 54 ♔b5 1-0

Black resigns as 54...♜d7 55 ♔a6 ♔e7 56 ♗c8 finishes things off.

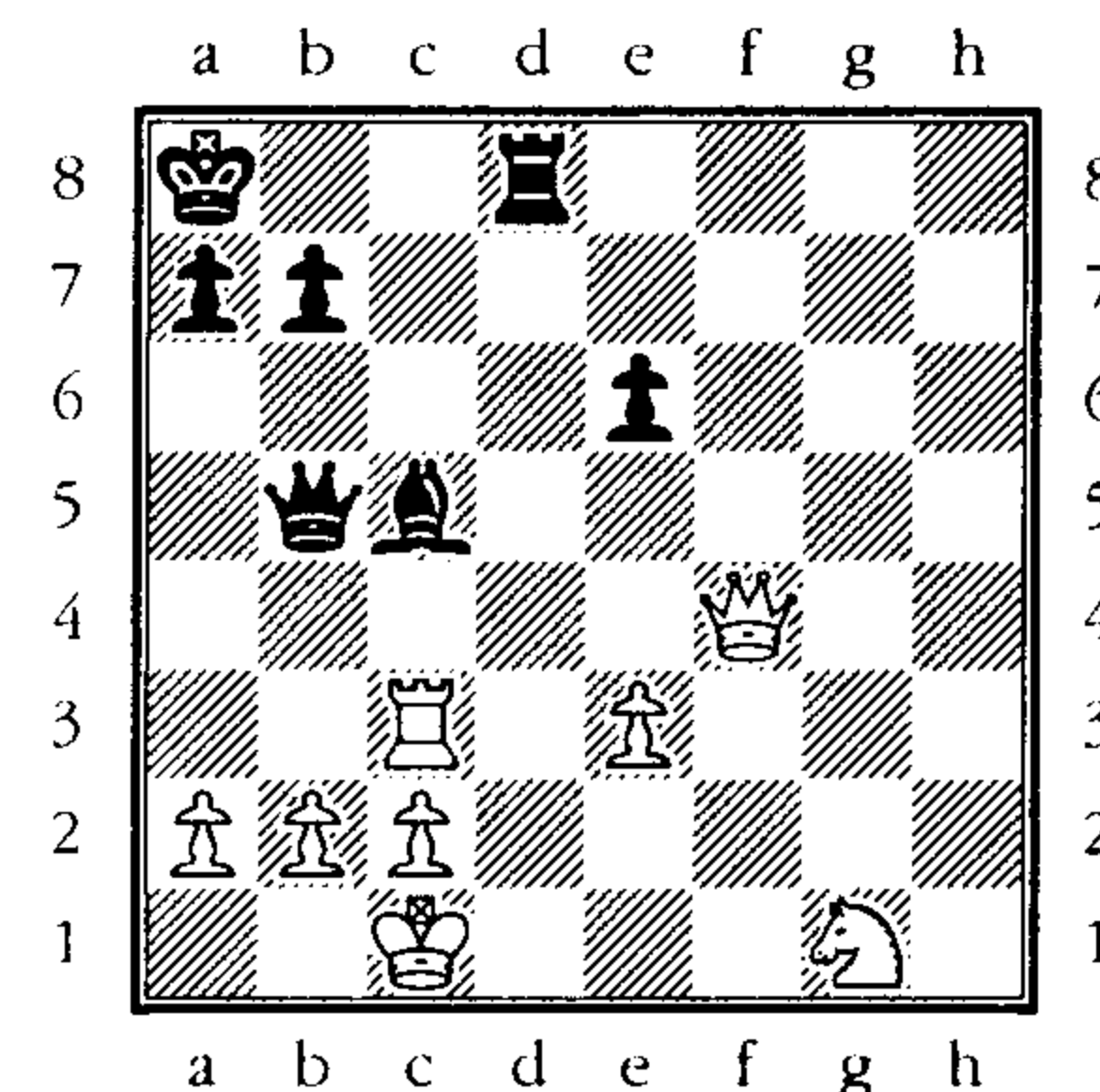


Spot the Mistake

18) A light-hearted look at some of the mistakes players have made

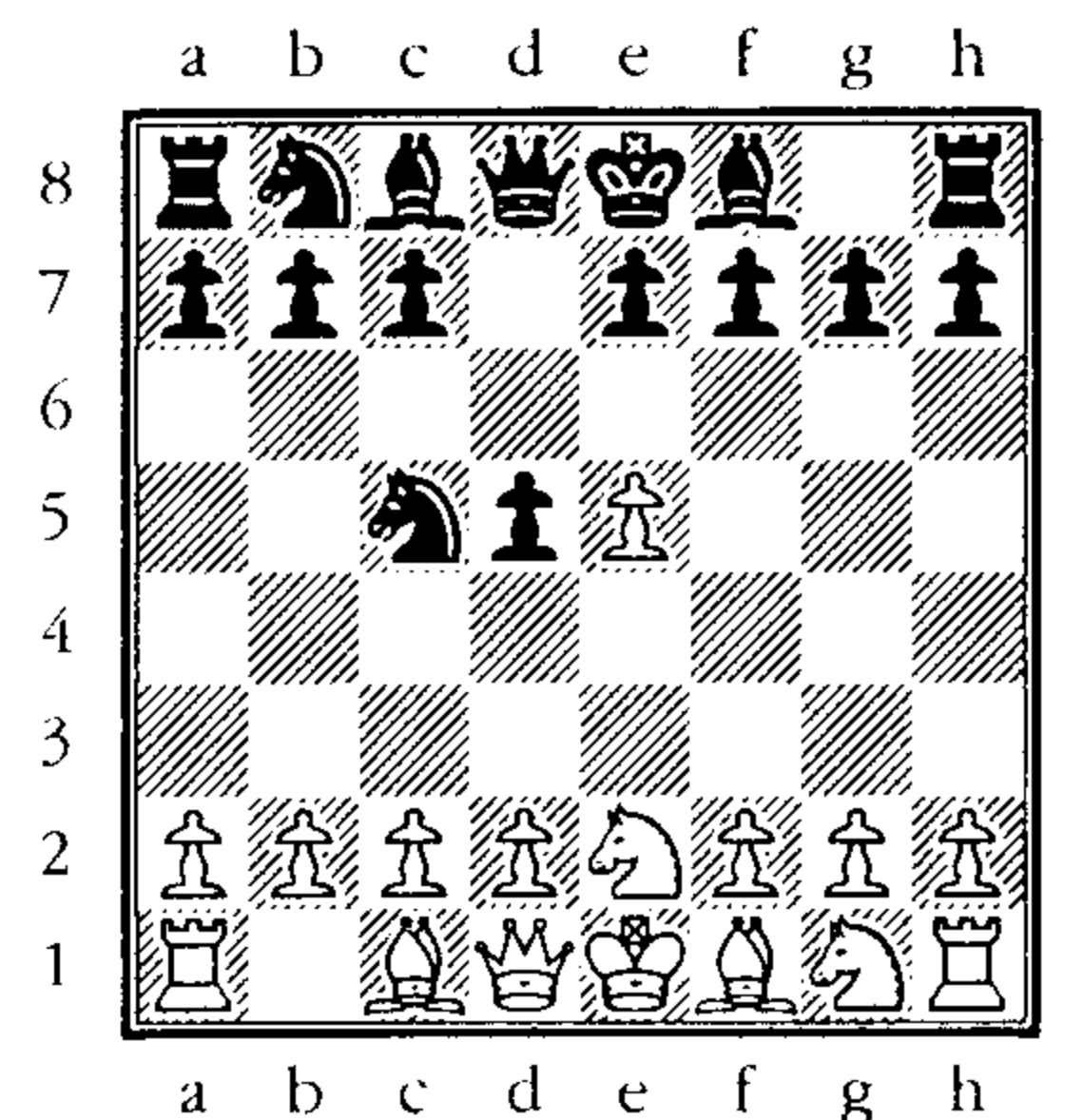
The main purpose of this section is to have a good laugh at the misfortunes of others! Cruel, you may say, but as we have all had our own 'moments' this is the time to take our revenge and gloat at the misfortunes of others. Look at the following diagrams and decide not only what you *would* play yourself but also more or less (and in some cases it is definitely more!) what is the *worst* move you could play, then turn to the 'solutions' to see what was played and analysis to show what should have been. For each 'worst move' you find award yourself 10 points. At the end of the solutions there is a scale to measure your performance!

2) A.Horton-Kitchlew - P.Denison Frome Open 1998



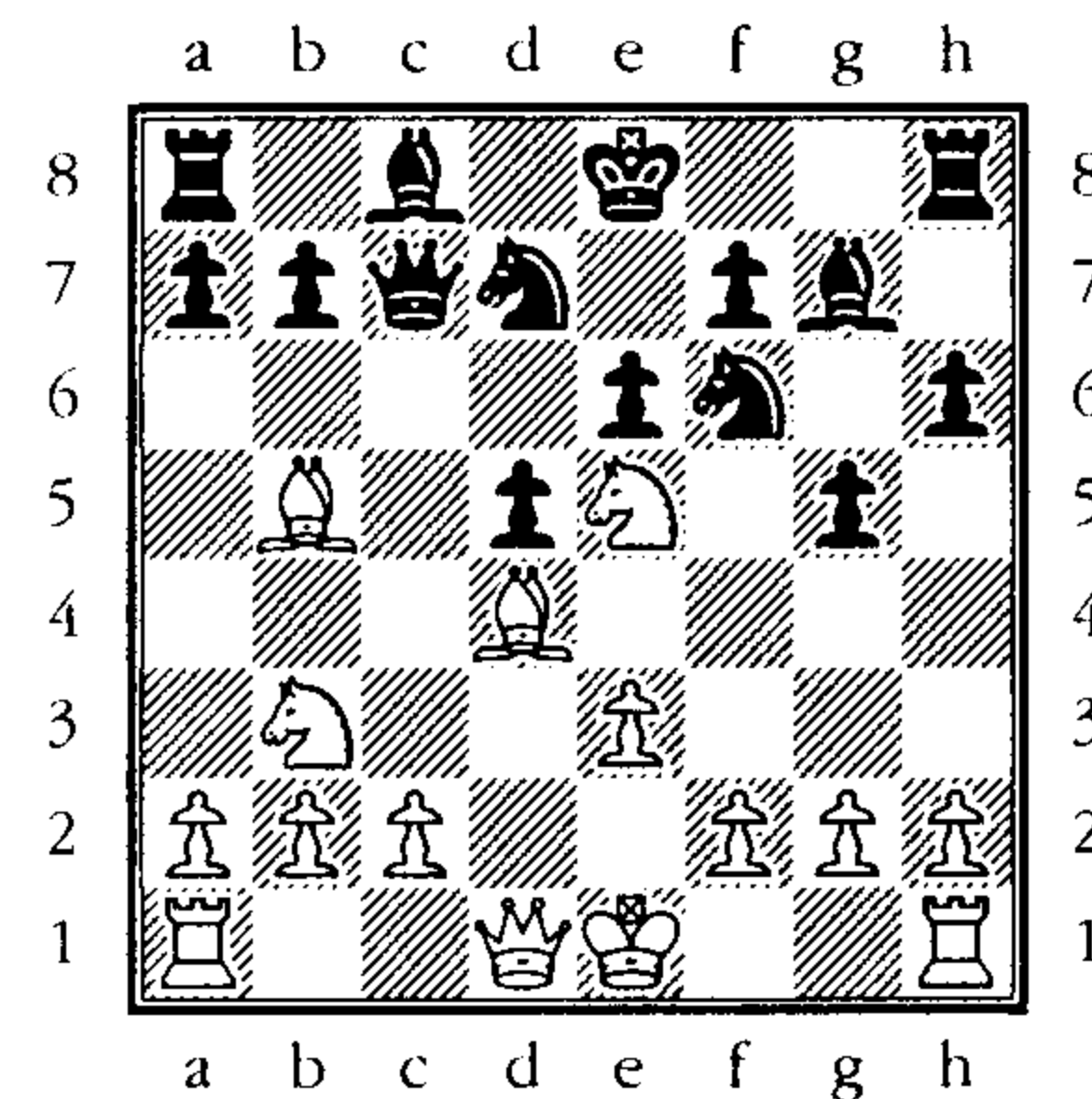
Black to play.

1) C.W.Baker - B.Cafferty British Championship Qualifier 1974



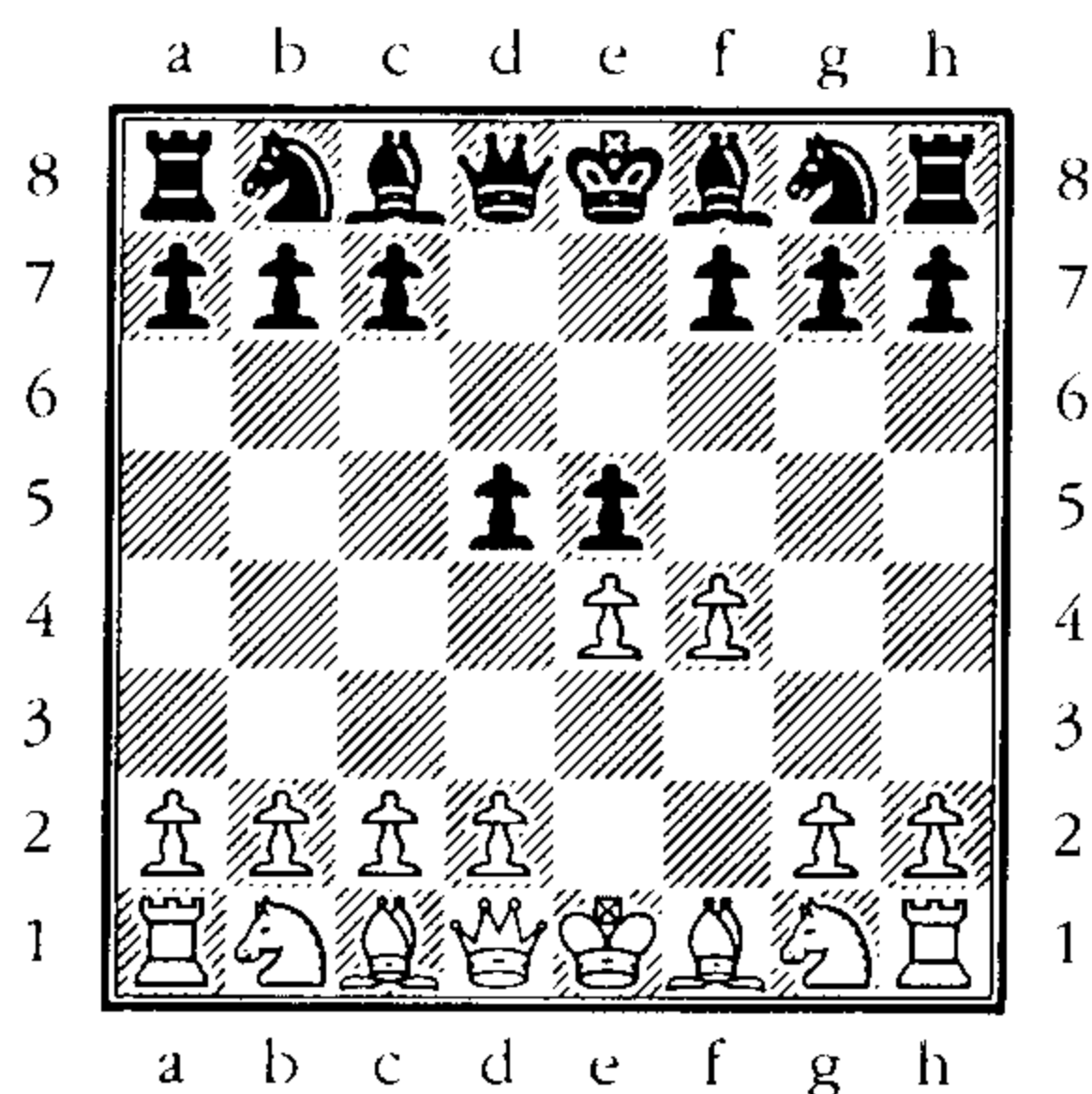
White to play

3) D.Collier - J.Richards Bristol League Open 1998



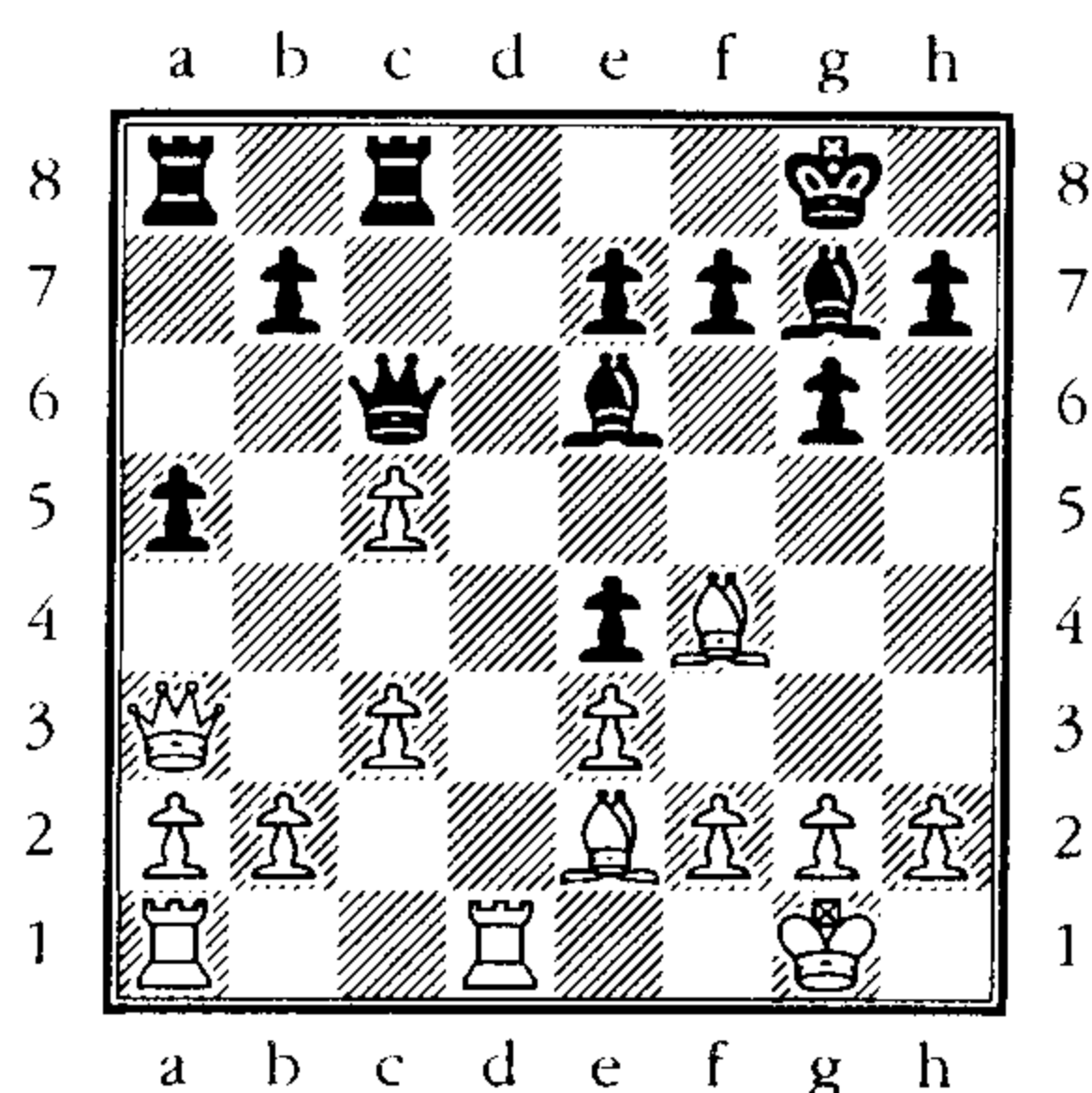
Black to play

4) Riguard - J.Cooper
Nice Olympiad 1974



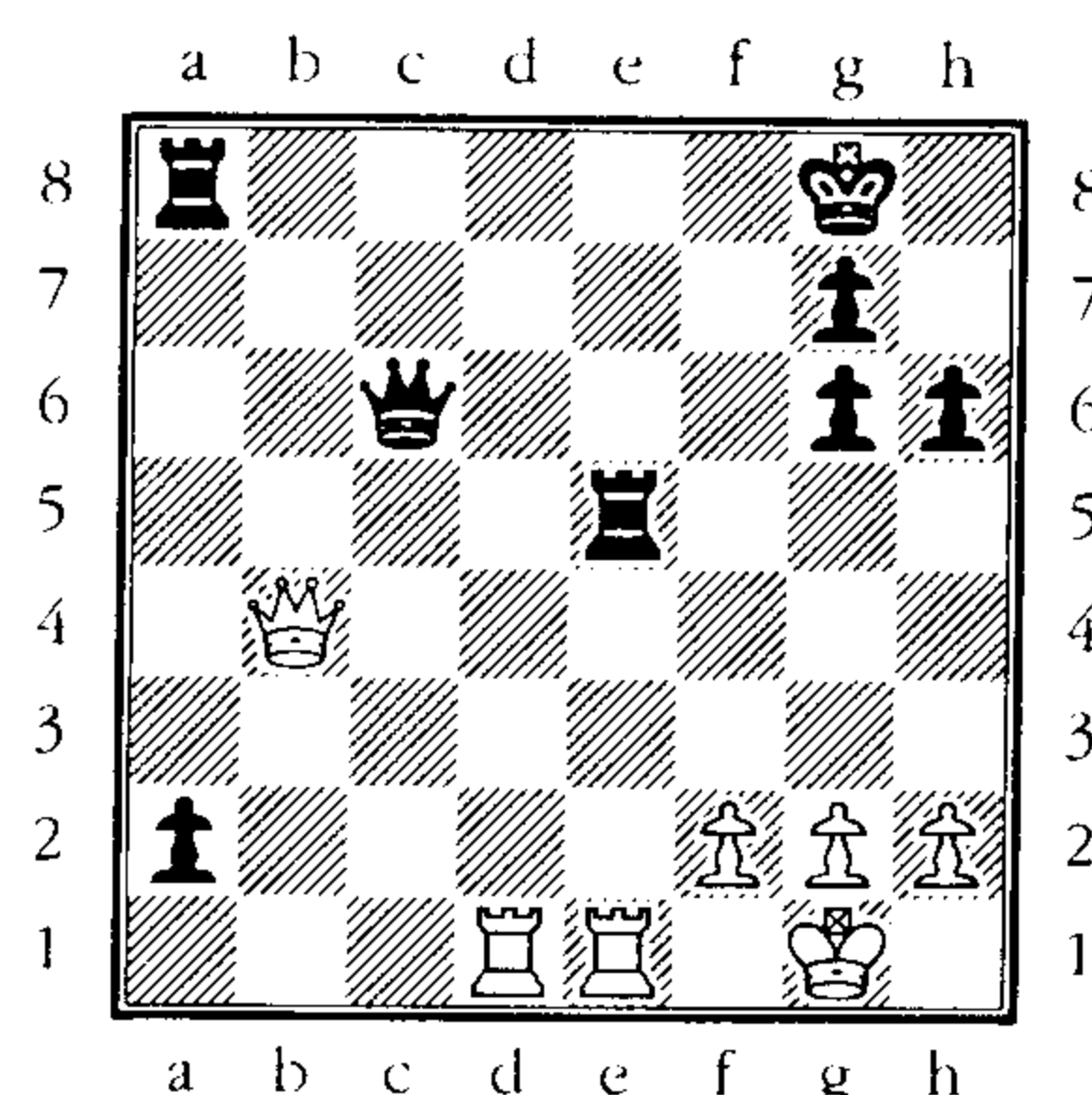
White to move

6) C.W.Baker - S.Buckley
Bristol League Open 1998



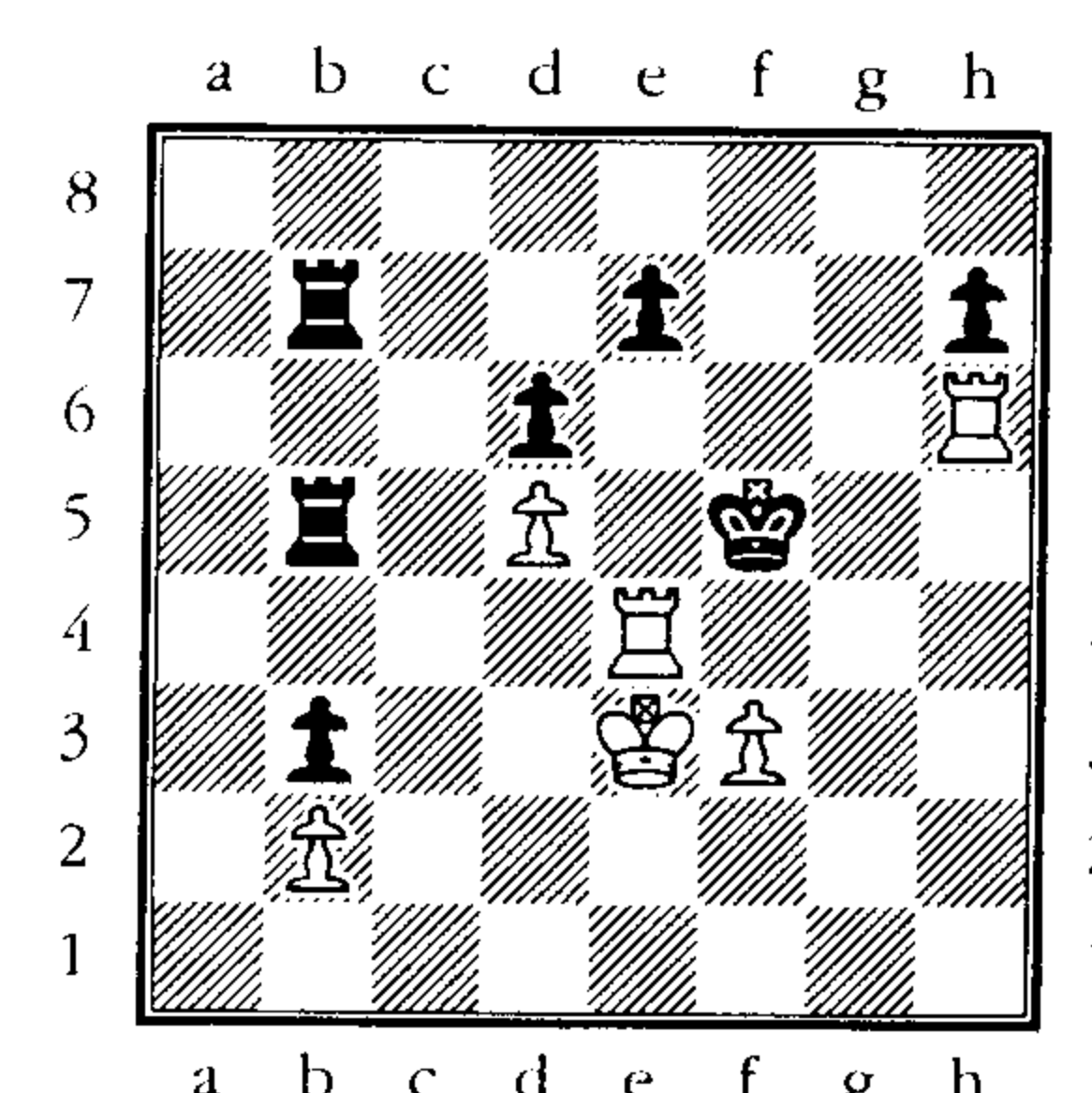
Black to move

8) J.Menadue - I.Okosieme
Frome Open 1998



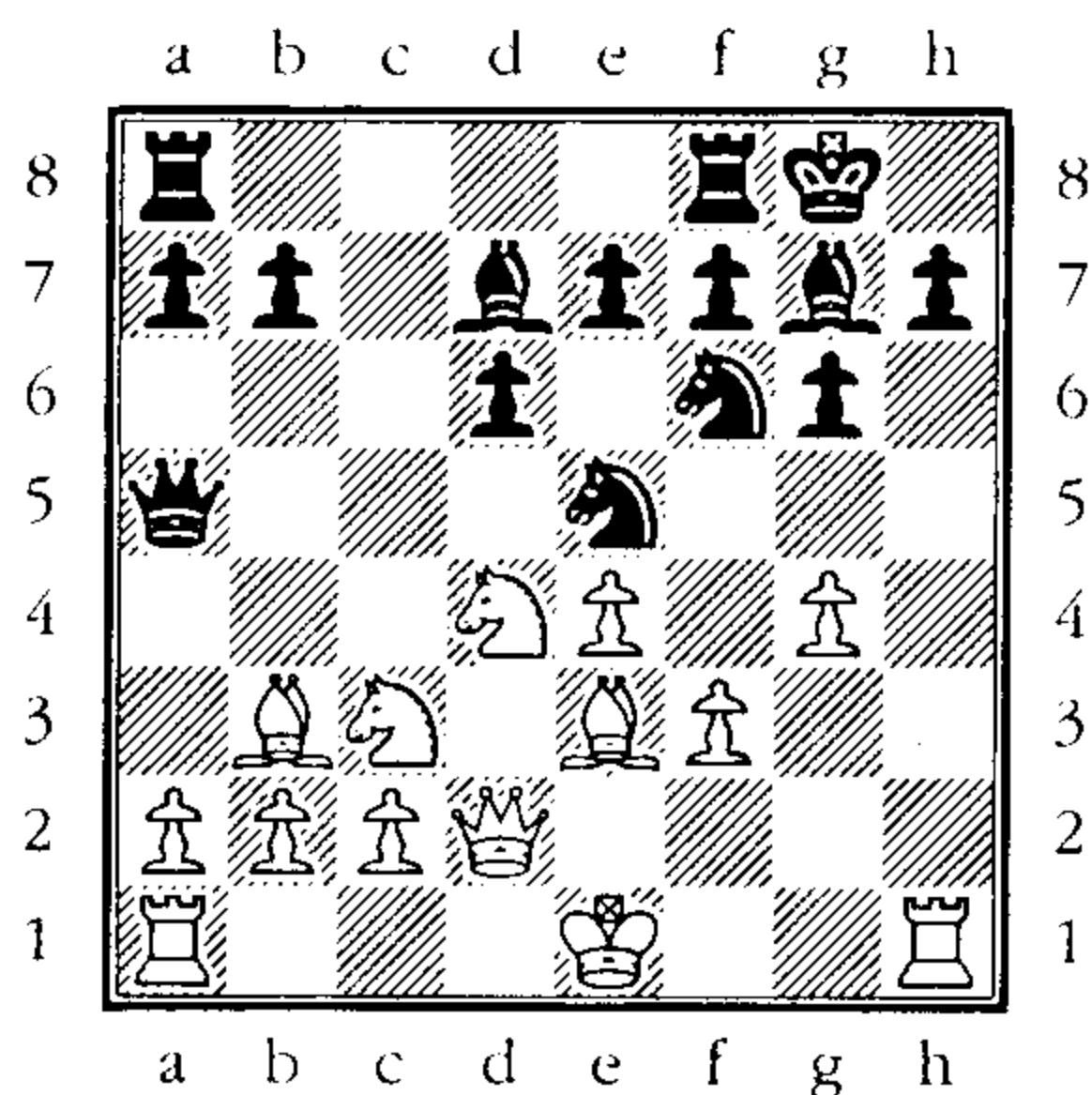
White to move

9) A.Shirov- V.Topalov
FIDE World Championship 2001



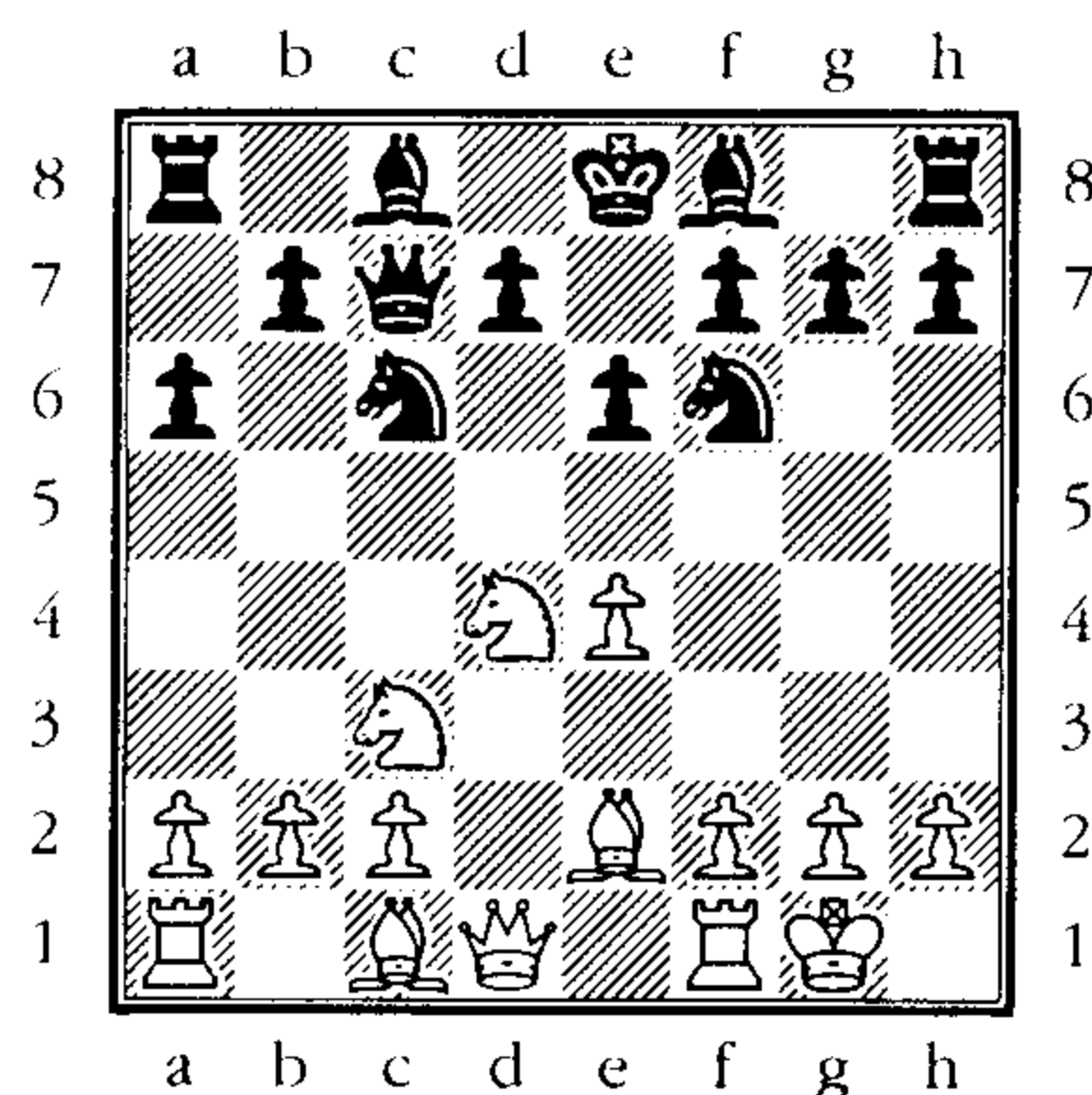
Black to play

5) P.Davies - S.Buckley
Frome Open 1998



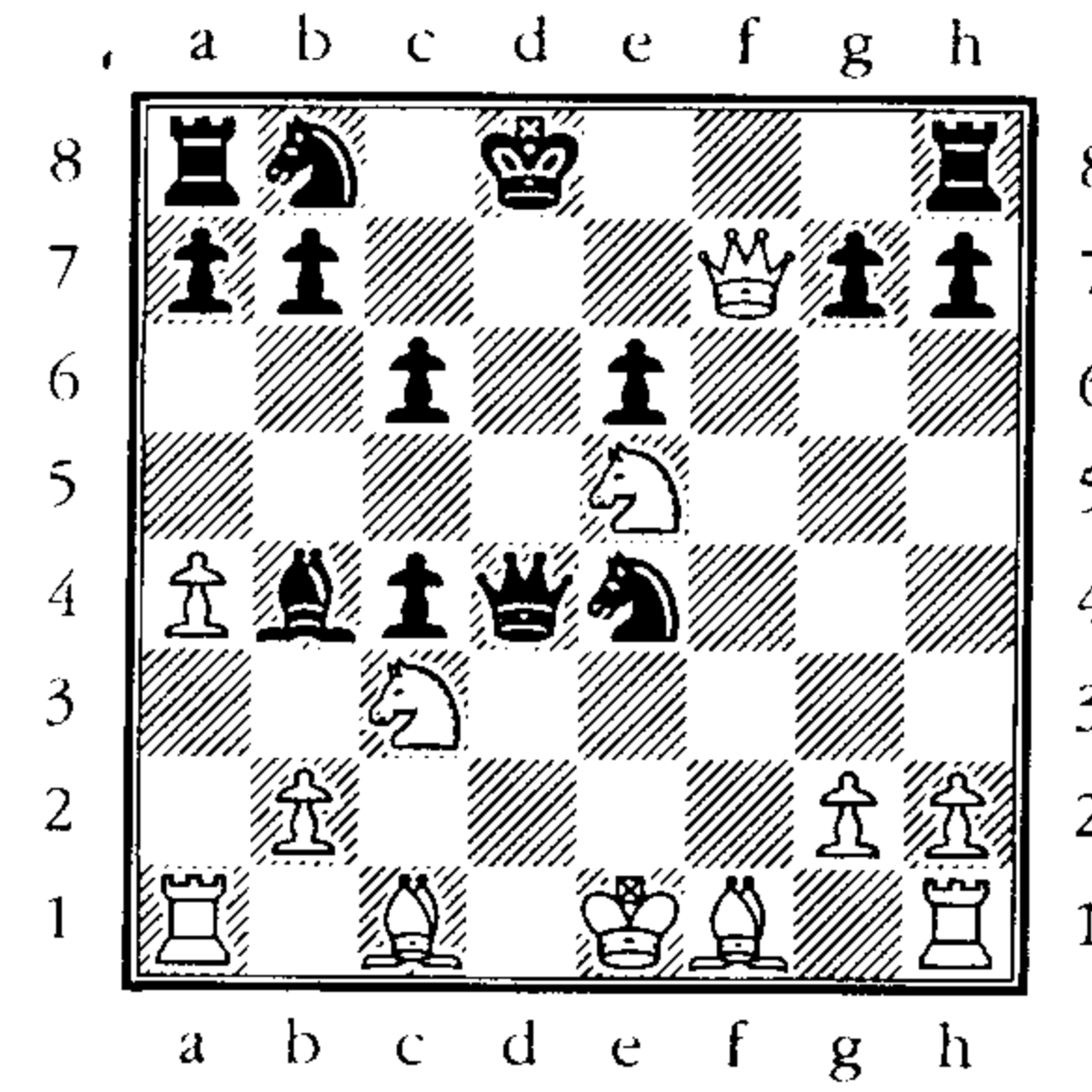
White to move

7) E.Moskalyuk - M.Brodsky
Cappelle la Grande Open 1998



White to play

10) Ooi - Taweechai



White to play

Solutions

1) 5 c3?? ♖d3 mate!

Sad to say I've had my 'moments' as well!! The position arose from the opening moves: 1 e4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 d5 3 e5 ♘e4 4 ♘ce2 ♘c5. The sad thing was that I had 'prepared' 5 d4 ♘e6 6 f4, given in theory as +=, but analysed at the board the line 5 c3 ♘f5 6 ♘g3 ♘d3+ 7 ♘xd3 ♘xd3 8 ♗f3 ♘g6 9 ♘1e2 and assessed (wrongly) that this offered White even better prospects. This 'blow' to me was quite devastating as I needed to win to become the youngest player up to that time to qualify for the main event at the British Championships. For a while I stopped playing, realising that people were laughing at me for this appalling mistake, but in chess there are always setbacks and it is important to 'bounce back'. When I learned to laugh at myself I used this 'experience' to grow mentally stronger and often use this game in junior training programs to show how bad a 'good player' can play.

2) 31...♗f8?? 32 ♗xf8+ 1-0 After 31...♘b4 there is still plenty of fight left in the position.

3) 13...♗a5+?? 14 ♘xa5 1-0 White had quite a good position anyway but after 13...0-0 (instead of 13...♗c7-a5) Black can certainly still put up resistance. Probably the

error was caused more than anything else by chess 'blindness' and Black thought the knight was on c3.

4) 3 fxe5?? ♗h4+ 4 g3 ♗xe4+ 5 ♘f2 ♘c5+ 0-1 Two moves of theory was just too much for White to handle! 3 exd5 is of course the main line.

5) 14 ♘f5?? ♘xf3+ 0-1 With 14 0-0-0 the position would have transposed back into a more 'normal' Sicilian Dragon.

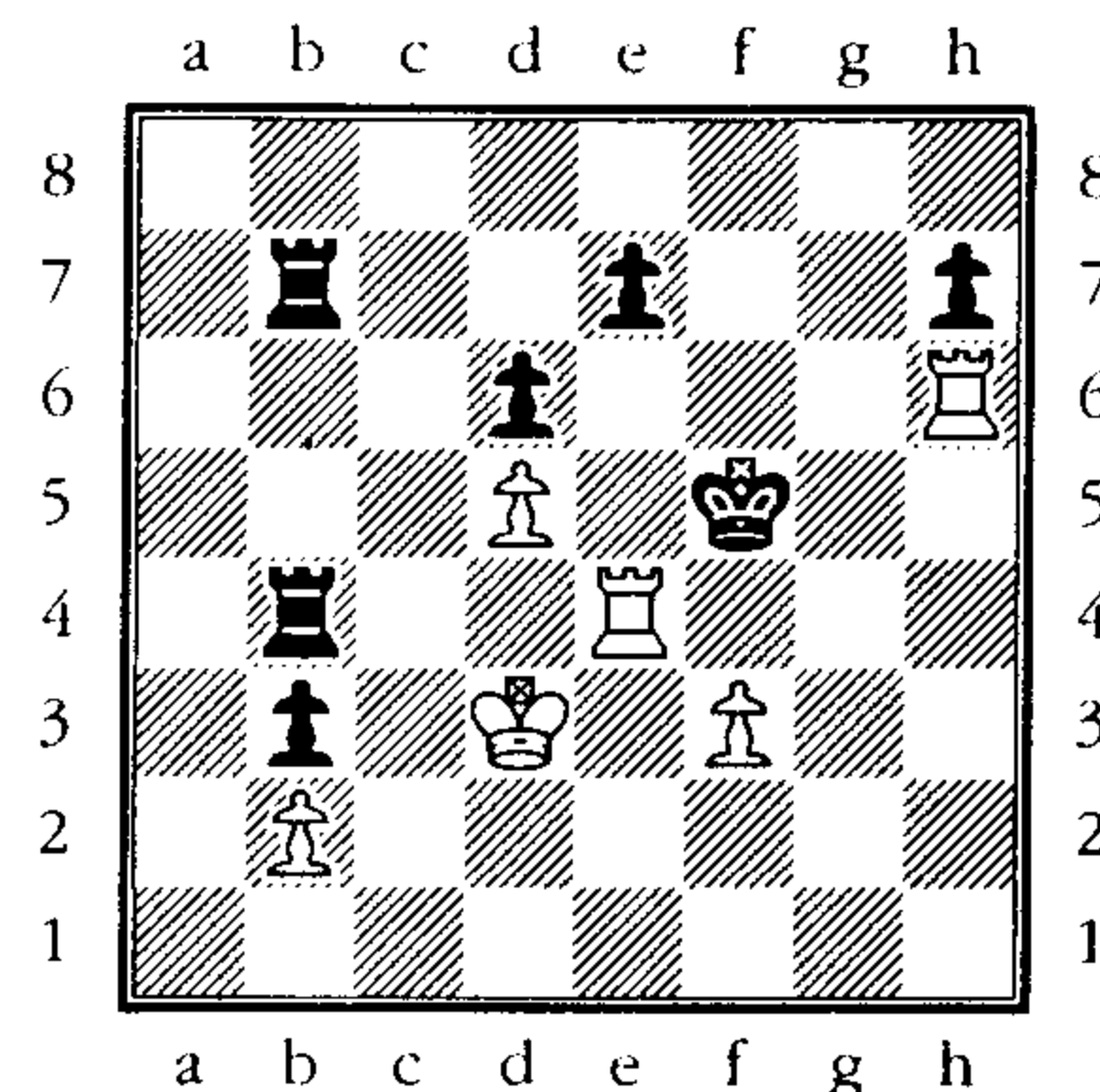
6) 15...♗xc5?? 16 ♖d8+! Black must lose queen for rook as after 16...♘f8 he loses a rook to 17 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 18 ♖xa8. If instead Black had played 15...h6 (instead of 15...♗c6xc5) and 16...♘xh7, prior to capturing the pawn, there would have been plenty of fight left in the position.

7) 8 f4?? ♘xd4 9 ♗xd4?? ♘c5 0-1 With 8 ♘e3 or 8 ♘h1 we would have a normal position from the Sicilian Defence.

8) 39 ♗b3+?? ♘h7 0-1 as Black's 'a'-pawn will eventually win the game. Instead 39 ♖xe5 a1=♗ 40 ♖xa1 ♖xa1+ 41 ♖e1 ♗c1 42 ♘f1 is level.

9) 36...♘g5??

I know it's cruel to look at a world class player making a bit of a 'boo-boo' but it always makes me feel just a little better to know they are human as well! 37 ♖eh4 1-0 as White will mate next move. In fact Black's position had deteriorated over the last couple of moves—if we went to the position after 34 ♖d4-e4



...we can see that instead of 35...♖4b5? Black could have drawn with 35...♖xe4 36 fxe4+ ♘g5 37 ♖xh7 ♖c7! 38 ♖f7! ♘g6 39 ♖f2 ♘g5 Now after 36 ♘e3 the position of the black king became critical.

10) 12 ♗xg7??

This position was reached via 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 dxc4 5 a4 ♘f5 6 ♘e5 e6 7 f3 ♘b4 8 e4 ♘xe4 9 fxe4 ♘xe4 10 ♗f3 (10 ♘d2 leads to sharp play and is the 'normal' try for White if he wants to aim for any kind of opening advantage—the text move is 'known' to lead to a quick draw) 10...♗xd4 11 ♗xf7+ ♘d8 12 ♗xg7?? (White 'forgets' his theory. 12 ♘g5+ ♘xg5 (12...♘c8!?) 13

♗xg7 ♘xc3+ 14 bxc3 ♗xc3+ 15 ♘e2 ♗c2+ 16 ♘e1 ♗c3+ with a perpetual has been played on more than one occasion) 12...♘xc3+ 13 bxc3 (13 ♘e2, while 'relatively best', offers White little hope after 13...♗xe5) 13...♗f2+ 14 ♘d1 ♘xc3 mate.

Patzer Scale

Points	Rating
100	Cheat!!
90	You are so bad you must be brilliant!!
80	Had plenty of practice at finding bad moves!?
70	Pretty bad or are you just pretty?!
60	One less and you'd be indifferent, one more and you'd be pretty!
50	Totally indifferent I don't know why I bother!
40	Sloppy—I wonder how you did at finding the good moves?
30	Not good enough to be rated sloppy!
20	Not totally hopeless but obviously working towards it!
10	Got one right by accident?—What happened did the dog knock over the piece with his tail and you got lucky!
1	Let's hope you can't find bad moves over the board as well!

You'll no doubt notice that the bottom score is 1—that's because if you got them all wrong I'm giving you a bonus point for remaining conscious! And please, no whimpering about how you found the move

played but changed your mind when you found something worse or your friend came up with a better suggestion—be a man and find your own bad moves!