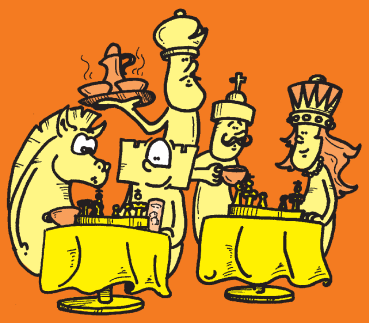


THE PUZZLING SIDE OF CHESS

Jeff Coakley

PROOF GAMES: MORIARTY'S CHALLENGE

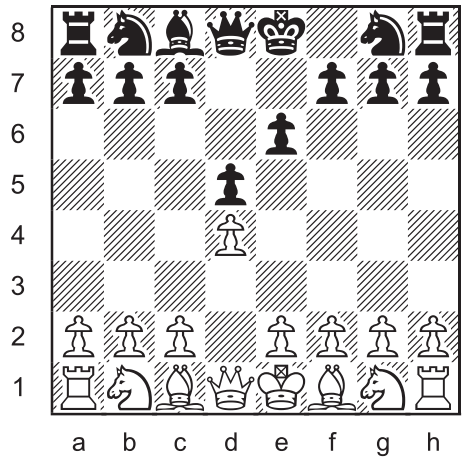
number 99 March 12, 2016

The task in a *proof game* is to show how a given position can be reached in a legal game.

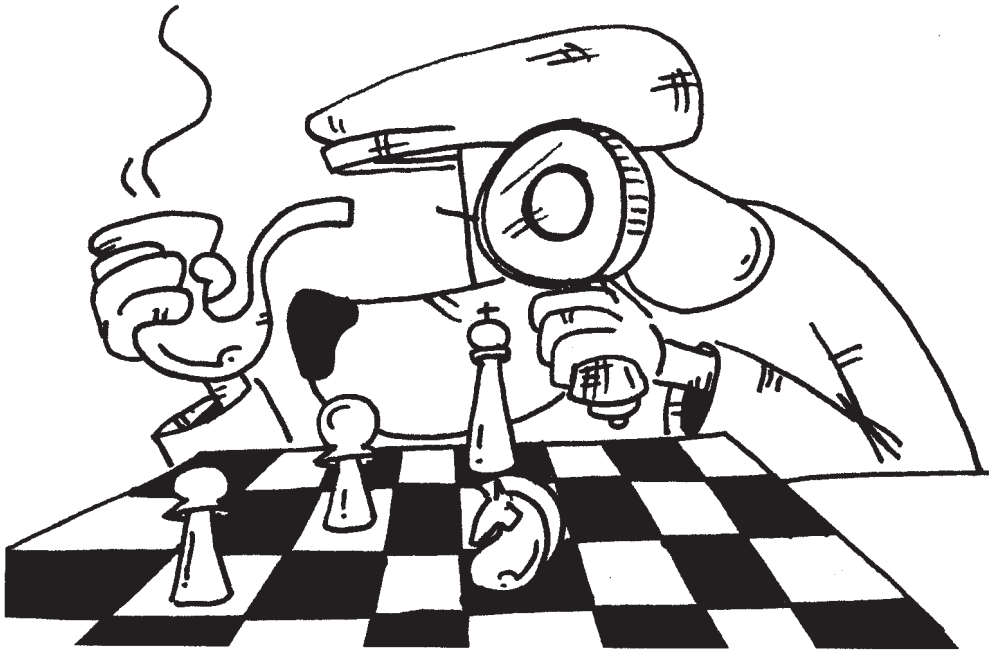
The puzzles in this column have a *move stipulation*. The position must be reached in a precise number of moves, no more and no less. The first two problems are proof games in 4.0 which means four moves by each side.

Forget about opening theory. There is no strategic thinking in these games. But the moves are legal.

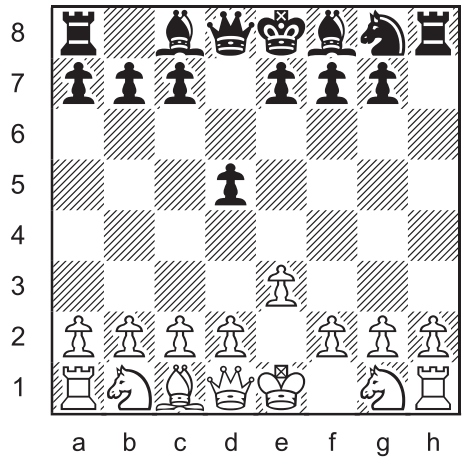
Proof Game 48



This position, with White to play, was reached in a game after each player made exactly four moves. What were the moves?



Proof Game 49

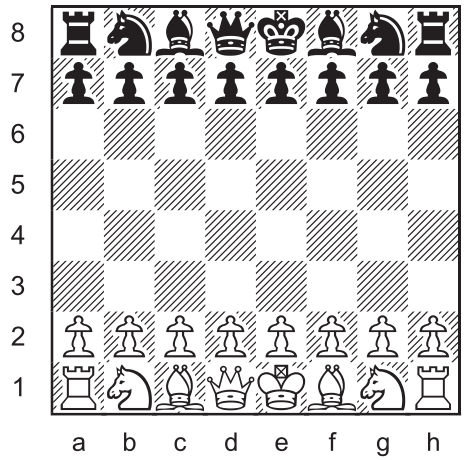


This position was reached after Black's fourth turn. What were the moves?

Before proceeding to a couple longer proof games, we have our usual synthetic diversion.

A *synthetic game* is similar to a proof game. But instead of finding the move sequence that leads to a given position, the task is to compose a game that ends with a particular move.

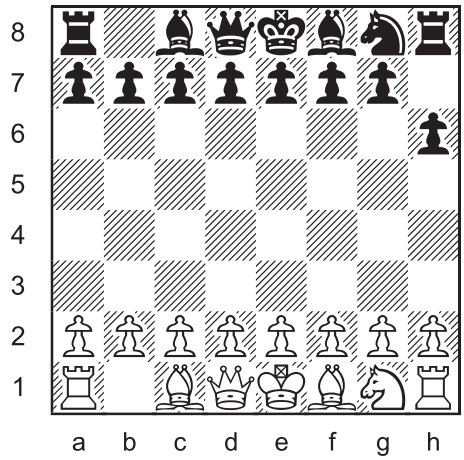
Synthetic Game 17



Compose a game that ends with the move **4...Bb7#**.

The next two problems are “longer proof games”. On the *Puzzling Side* that means more than four moves. Obviously things get tougher with each extra step forward. Or is it a step backward?

Longer Proof Game 11 (5.0 moves)



This position was reached after Black’s fifth turn. What were the moves?

Our final mystery is by special guest Ron Fenton from Yellow Springs, Ohio. Besides presenting us with a challenging investigation, he has provided a brief account of one well-known detective’s interest in the case.

Moriarty's Challenge

Watson was beside himself. Holmes had been hunched over the chessboard since 8 o’clock the previous night and smoke filled the room ...

"What's the problem?" inquired the good doctor.

Sherlock puffed at his pipe. "Moriarty."

"Not again."

"To be precise, Moriarty's game," added Holmes.

"I see, and why is Moriarty's game a problem?"

“He thinks I’ll choose the wrong solution. He thinks I can't find the key."

"Wrong solution? Key? I thought it was a game. How can a game be a problem with a key?"

"Elementary, my dear Watson. Moriarty has challenged me to deduce the nine moves of a chess game that he played, against himself. And all I have to work with is the final placement of the pieces. The problem is, there are dozens of ways to reach the position!"

"Not much of a problem," Watson muttered under his breath, adding at the end of another long pause, "Well, I have boots to polish."

"Got it!" exclaimed the world's pre-eminent consulting detective.

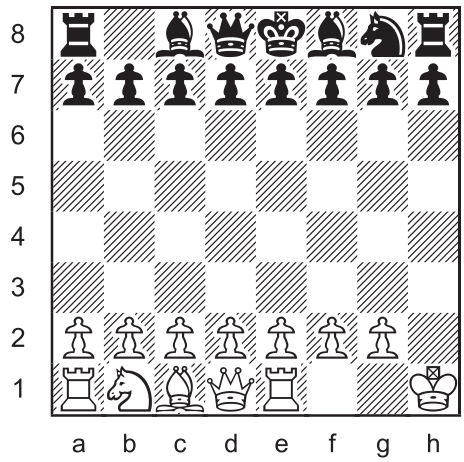
"Got it? Got what?"

"The key! After playing Moriarty's games over in my mind, the *key* could not be more obvious. He invariably opens with a knight!"

"And how exactly does that observation qualify as a key?"

"It doesn't, my dear Doctor Watson. But there is only one solution when White begins with a pawn!"

Proof Game (9.0 moves)



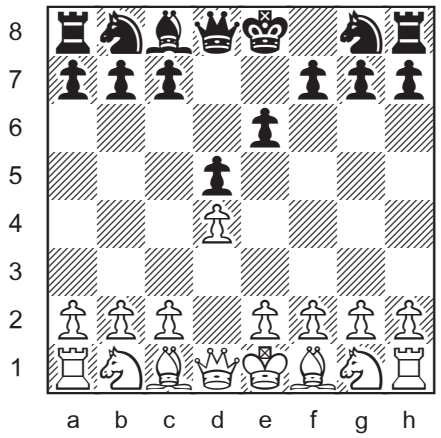
Given that Moriarty opened this 9-move game by advancing a pawn, what were the moves?

SOLUTIONS

Except for the final proof game, all problems by J. Coakley, *Puzzling Side of Chess* (2016).

PDF hyperlinks. You can advance to the solution of any puzzle by clicking on the underlined title above the diagram. To return to the puzzle, click on the title above the solution diagram.

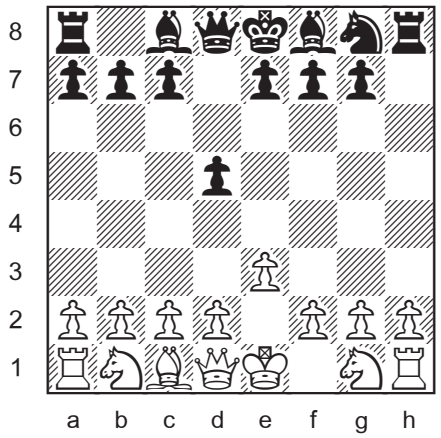
Proof Game 48



1.d3 e6 2.d4 Ba3 3.Nxa3 d6 4.Nb1 d5

A strange gambit. *Switchback* on b1 plus *tempo moves* by two pawns.

Proof Game 49

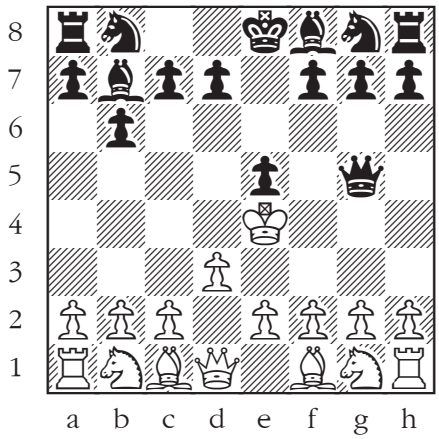


1.e3 d5 2.Bd3 Nd7 3.Bxh7 Ndf6 4.Bxg8 Nxg8

The *impostor* knight on g8 helps conceal the fate of the missing white bishop.

This problem is very similar to *proof game 23* in column 38.

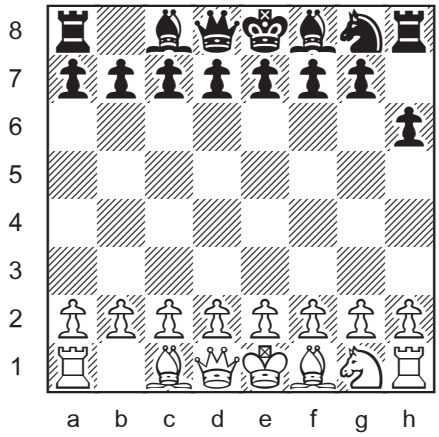
Synthetic Game 17



1.d3 e5 2.Kd2 b6 3.Ke3 Qg5+ 4.Ke4 **Bb7#**

The solution is not unique. Black's first two moves can be switched and ...b5 can be played instead of ...b6.

Longer Proof Game 11 (5.0 moves)



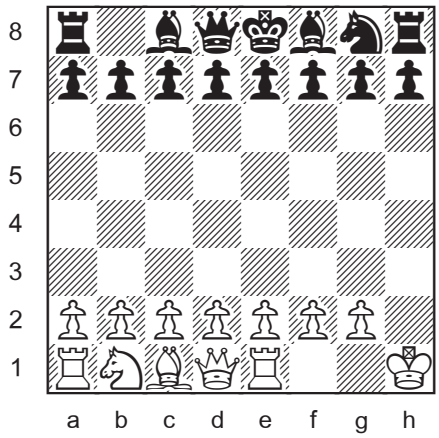
1.Na3 Nc6 2.Nc4 Ne5 3.Nxe5 h6 4.Ng6 Rh7 5.Nh8 Rxh8

A switchback by the black rook, making a capture on its original square. The *Orbán effect*, named after Hungarian composer Tibor Orbán (1956-1981). See column 3.

Longer Proof Game 12 (9.0 moves)

Ron Fenton 2016

The Puzzling Side of Chess



1.h4 Nf6

2.h5 Nxh5

3.Nf3 Ng3

4.Nd4 Nxf1

5.Kxf1 Nc6

6.Kg1 Nxd4

7.Kh2 Nf5

8.Re1 Nh6

9.Kh1 Ng8

Illusory castling by White and a wandering *impostor* knight on g8. The devious mastermind of arch-enemy Moriarty.

This problem is a *conditional proof game*. The first move must be made by a pawn. Without this restriction, there are many solutions.

Thanks for the story and game, Ron.

For another problem by our special guest, see the third prize winner in the *2013 Puzzlers Cup* (column 54).

Until next time!

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