



THE PUZZLING SIDE OF CHESS

Jeff Coakley

ALEKHINE'S WHAMMY

number 80

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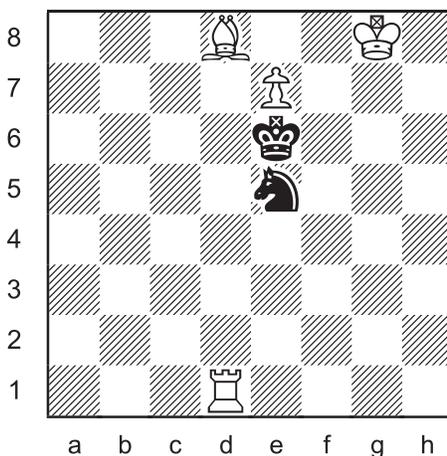
Besides a full round of double whammies, this column features a detailed analysis of Fortis-Alekhine 1925, the most famous game of *Marseillais Chess* ever played.

“Double whammy” is another name for a *series-mate in two*. Here are the special rules for this type of problem.

- White plays two moves in a row to mate Black.
- The first move may not be check.
- Either move may be a capture.
- Both moves may be with the same piece.
- Black does not get a turn.
- White may not place their own king in check on the first move, even if they get out of check with the second move.

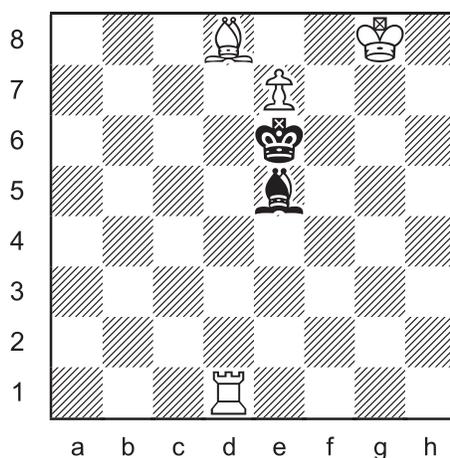
If you haven't experienced the whammy before, here are a couple easy ones to get you started.

Double Whammy 47



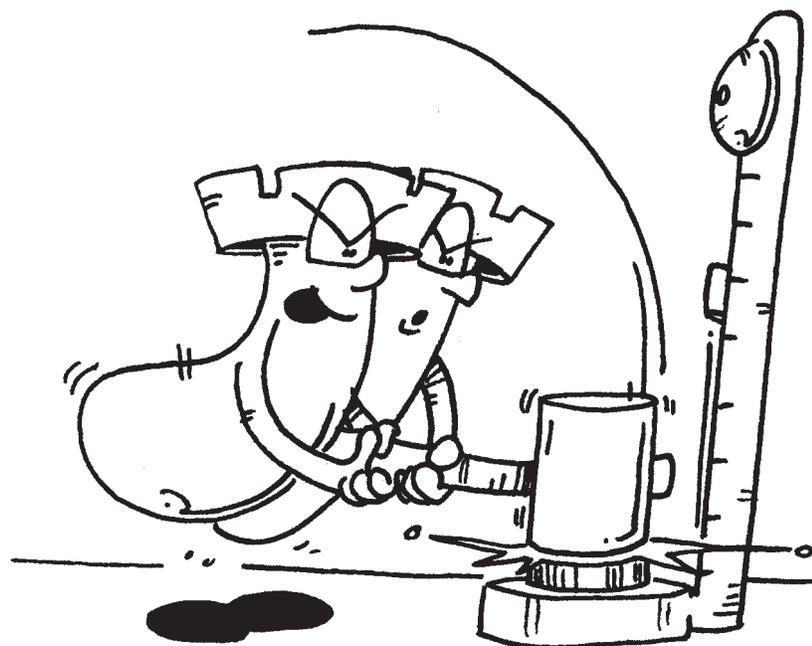
White plays two moves
in a row to mate Black.

Double Whammy 48



White plays two moves
in a row to mate Black.

For more information on series-mates, see *Bring On the Whammy* (column 65) in the archives.

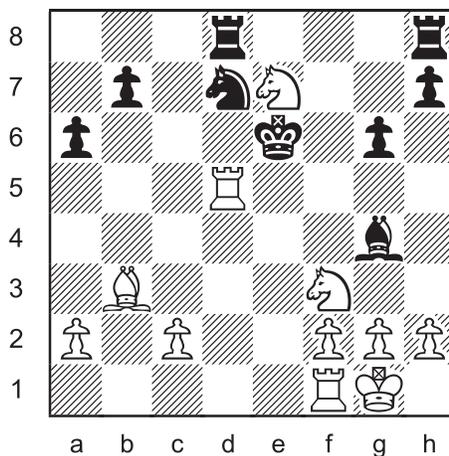


The Double Rook Hammer

Time now for the “tough stuff”. It’s a set of septuplets.

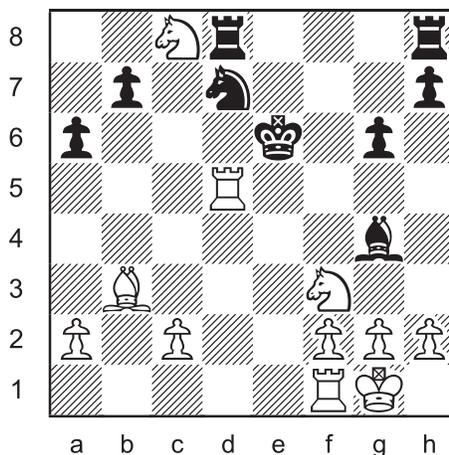
These seven puzzles (49-55) are *approximate twins*. Only one or two things are different in each position. That’s convenient when you set them up on a board.

Double Whammy 49



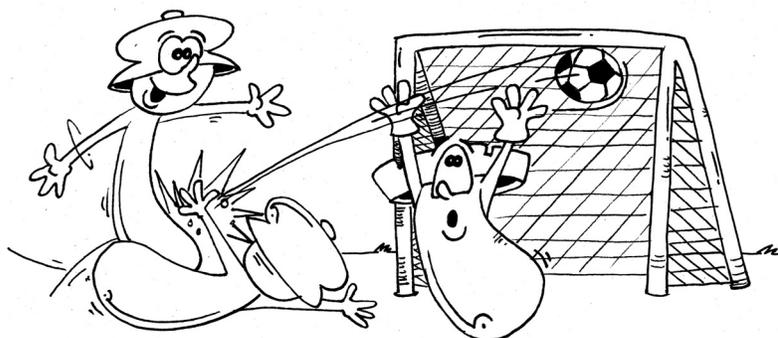
White plays two moves
in a row to mate Black.

Double Whammy 50

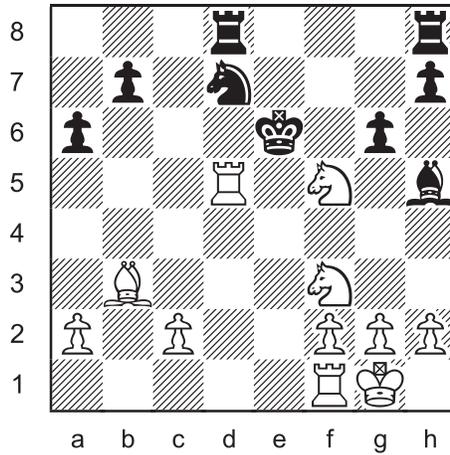


White plays two moves
in a row to mate Black.

A double whammy can also be posed this way: *Find a non-checking move which threatens mate in one.*

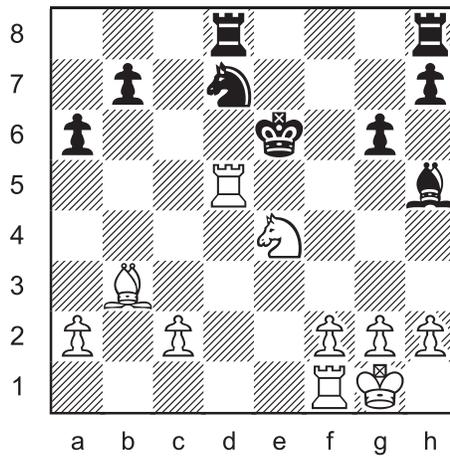


Double Whammy 51



White plays two moves in a row to mate Black.

Double Whammy 52

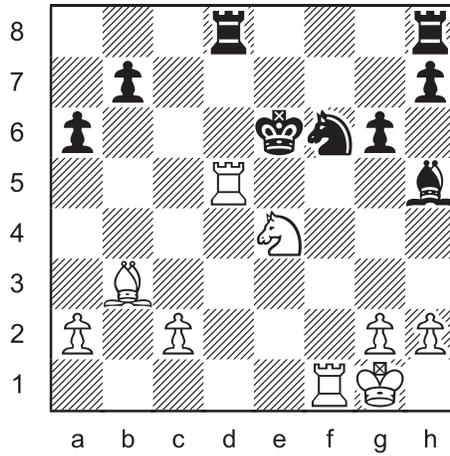


White plays two moves in a row to mate Black.

Fourth down, three to go.

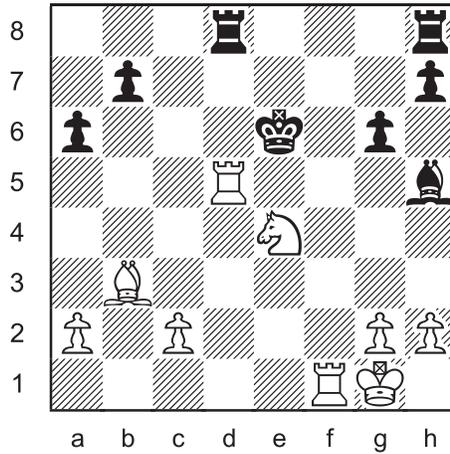


Double Whammy 53



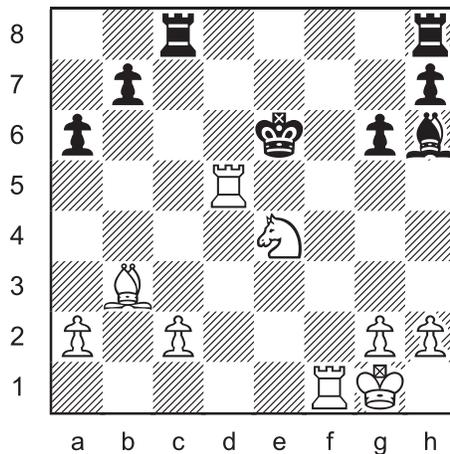
White plays two moves in a row to mate Black.

Double Whammy 54



White plays two moves in a row to mate Black.

Double Whammy 55



White plays two moves in a row to mate Black.

This kind of puzzle is closely related to a chess variant known as *Marseillais Chess*, in which each player gets two moves on every turn. It's a whole game of double whammies! Here are the rules.

MARSEILLAIS CHESS

The standard laws of chess are followed with these modifications:

- a) Each player makes two moves on every turn, except for the restrictions in rules c and d.
- b) If a player is in check, they must get out of check with their first move. If that is impossible, it is checkmate.
- c) If a player gives check with their first move, they do not get a second move on that turn.
- d) On the first turn of the game, White only gets one move.
- e) A player may move the same piece on both moves of a turn. The piece may return to the square it started on.
- f) If a player has no legal move after the first move of their turn, the game ends in stalemate.
- g) An en passant capture may only be played on the first move of a player's turn. The captured pawn must have moved two squares on the second move of the opponent's previous turn.



The game was invented in Marseille, France in the early 1920s. According to some sources, by a Norwegian named J. Rossow who was living there at the time. The rules were first published in 1925 by editor Albert Fortis in the newspaper *Le Soleil*.

Marseillais Chess became quite popular during the next decade. Many leading masters are known to have played, including world champion Alexander Alekhine. To our good fortune, one of his games was recorded.

His opponent is Albert Fortis (1873-1926), a resident of Marseille, originally from Greece. A journalist by profession, he was also a recognized champion of Marseillais chess!

The game was played in August 1925 at the *Circle Philidor* in Paris. The circumstances surrounding the contest are unknown to me.

What follows is my lengthy analysis of their classic battle. There was no computer engine to lend a hand. It's a purely human effort. Just like the old days, pre-Fritz! If you find any errors or improvements, I would appreciate hearing about them. Thanks.

Some very brief annotations to the game were given by British master David Pritchard (1919-2005) in the book *Popular Chess Variants* (2000). His notes, copied from a secondary source, are shown in italics preceded by DP.

Italian experts Roberto Cassano and Fabio Forzoni gave a few additional comments in a 2006 article for AISE, the *Italian Association for Chess Variants*. My translations are indicated by C/F.

Albert Fortis - Alexander Alekhine

Paris 1925

Marseillais Chess

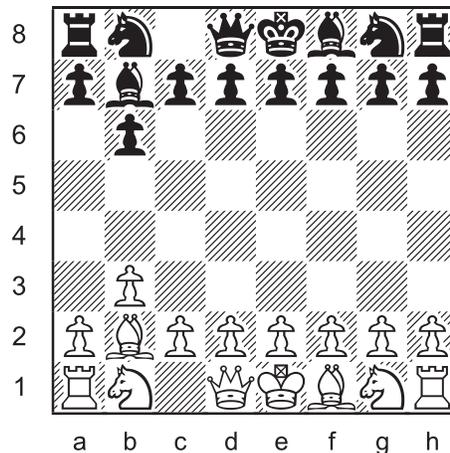
1.b3/Bb2

The accepted notation is to separate the two moves of a turn by a forward slash.

The modern rule (1963) limiting White to one move on their first turn was not in effect. The openings 1.e4/Nf3 and 1.d4/Nf3 were considered winning advantages by some authorities. Interesting is 1.g4/g5, known as the Fortis Attack!

1...b6/Bb7

Both players fianchetto their queen bishops. We're in for a lot of action along the long diagonals.



2.e4/Be2

DP: *Better than 2.Bxg7/Bxh8.*

2.Bxg7/Bxh8?! would be answered by 2...Bg7/Bxh8 with advantage to Black.

The relative values of the pieces in Marseillais chess are not the same as in the standard game. In general, it seems that bishops are worth more than rooks in the opening and middlegame.

2...Bxe4/Bc6

DP: *A common manoeuvre. An attacked man is always vulnerable. Not 2...Bxe4/Bb7? 3.Bf3/Bxb7 Qc8/Qxb7 4.Qf3/Qxb7 winning.*

The manoeuvre he refers to is making two moves with the same piece, the first to capture, the second to retreat to a safe square. It is so common, I would elevate it to the status of standard *tactic*.

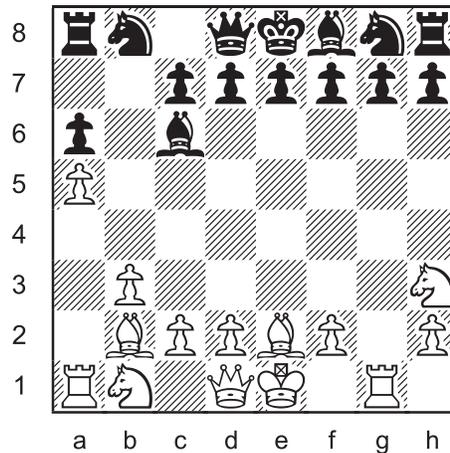
For players unfamiliar with this variant, it could be pointed out that 2...Bxe4/Bxg2? loses to 3.Bf3/Bxg2.

3.a4/a5!?

A bayonet attack designed to open the a-file. The threat is 4.axb6/bxc7.

5.Nh3/Rg1!

The copycat scheme 5.Bxg7/Bc3? Bxh1/Bc6 6.Bxh8/Bc3 is funny, and also flawed because of 5...Bg7/Bxc3!



White is down a pawn but his active pieces give him what should be a decisive advantage.

5...e5/Nf6

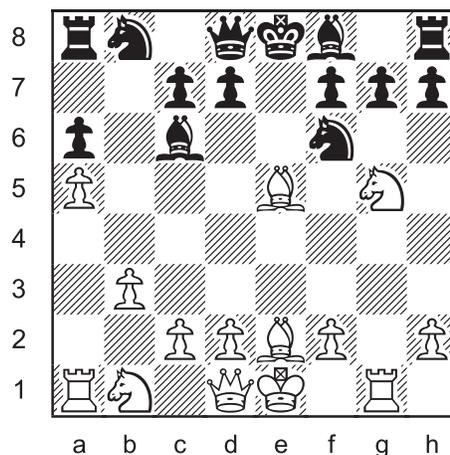
C/F Black finally begins to think about developing. But it's too late.

It's hard to suggest anything better. 5...Bg2/Bxh3 6.Rg3/Rxh3 and 5.Bf3/Bxe2 6.Qxe2/Qf3 both leave White in full control. And I don't see how Black survives after 5...e6/Be7. Among other things, there is 6.Bh5/Bxf7+!?

6.Bxe5/Ng5

DP: With a double threat on the black queen.

Wham, bam! Besides picking off a pawn, White is smiling at the possibility of 7.Nxf7/Nxd8 or 7.Bxf6/Bxd8.



C/F: *White has a huge advantage. He threatens to capture the queen and the rook. If Black tries to save them both with 6...Qc8/Rg8, there is the strong 7.Bc4/Bxf7+.*

6...Ng4/Nxf2!?

A desperate defence, sacrificing a knight to counterattack the white queen and expose the white king.

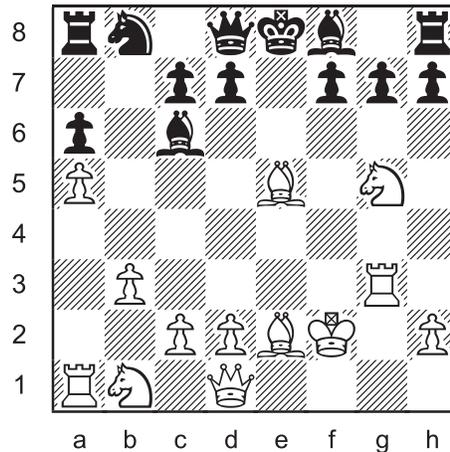
C/F: *Black tries to muddy the water.*

7.Kxf2/d4?

C/F: *And he succeeds. Better is 7.Kxf2/Rg3!*

DP: *7.Kxf2/Rg3 was a winning coup according to one annotator.*

This is the crux of the battle. Let's examine the position after 7.Kxf2/Rg3.



The black queen is still under duress.

7...Qxg5/Qf5+ does not work because of 8.Rf3/Rxf5, the main reason for the rook lift to g3.

Running with ...Qc8 saves the queen, without salvation.

7...Qc8/f6 8.Bxf6/Bh5+!? (8...g6/gxh5? 9.Qxh5#)

7...Qc8/Be7 8.Nxf7/Nxh8

Another inadequate option is 7...Bb5/Bxe2. White is cruising to victory after 8.Qxe2/Bxg7+ (8...Qe7/Qxe2+ 9.Kxe2/Bxh8 or 8...Qe7/Bxg7 9.Re3/Rxe7+).

There are several ways that Black can get two pieces for the queen. But he already sacked a knight, so the end result is not promising.

7...Qxg5/Qxe5 8.Re3/Rxe5+ (Q vs. B + p)

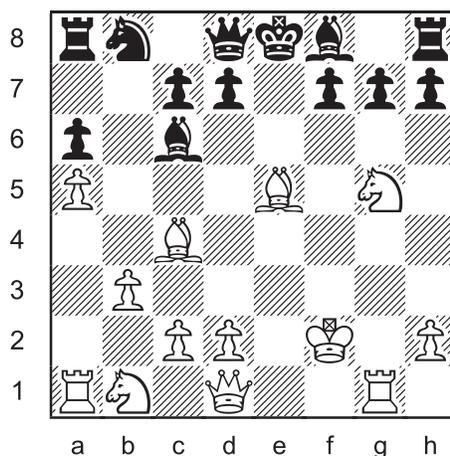
7...Bd6/Bxe5 8.Nxf7/Nxd8 Kxd8/Bxg3+ 9.Kxg3 (Q vs. R)

7...Qxg5/Qxg3+ 8.Bxg3/d4 (Q vs. R + p)

This last line is the least bad defence.

The conclusion is clear. 7.Kxf2/Rg3 is indeed a “winning coup”.

But it is not the only one. Check out 7.Kxf2/Bc4!



White threatens a couple different mates on f7.

7...Bf3/Bxd1? 8.Bd6/Bxf7#

7...h6/hxg5? 8.Qf3/Qxf7#

7...d5/dxc4? 8.Qh5/Qxf7#

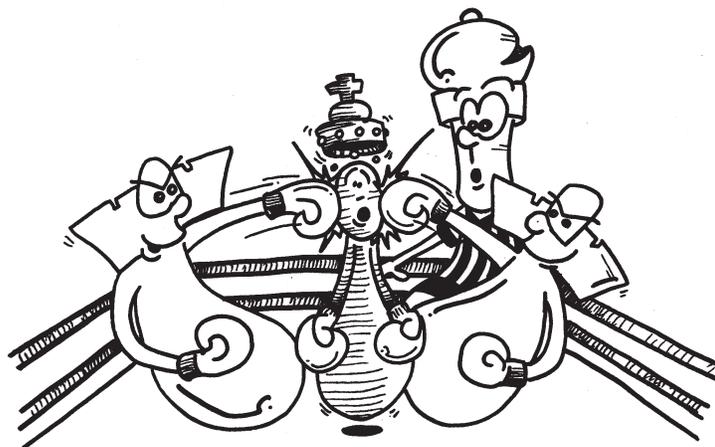
This time, 7...Qxg5/Qf5+ fails to 8.Qf3/Qxf5. After 8...Be4/Bxf5, White can choose between 9.Bd3/Bxf5 d6/dxe5 10.Be4/Bxa8 or 9.Re1/Bxc7+!?

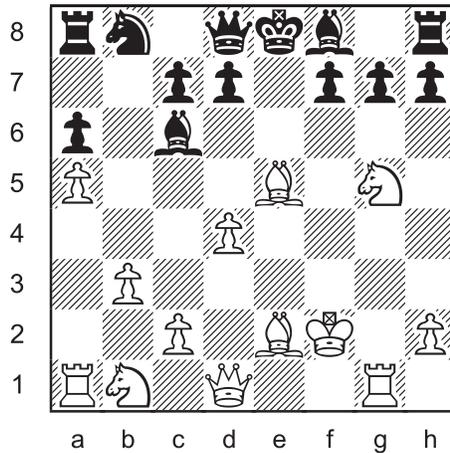
Stopping mate with 7...Bd5/Bxc4 loses to 8.bxc4/Qf3!

An amusing way to get mated is 7...Qxg5/Qh4+ 8.Bg3/Bxh4 Bf3/Bxd1 9.Rxg7/Bxf7#.

The nearest thing to a defence is probably 7...Qxg5/Qxg1+ 8.Qxg1/d4. (Q vs. R + p)

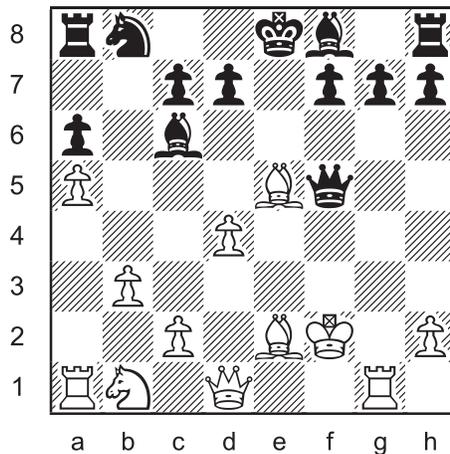
So Fortis overlooked two winning moves on this turn. Unfortunately for him, 7.Kxf2/d4? is a dreadful mistake which lets Alekhine off the hook.





7...Qxg5/Qf5+!

This is what White missed. By checking on f5, the queen is safe from capture. And that isn't all. Black also regains the sacrificed piece with a superior position. Astounding.



8.Ke1/Bd3?

As often happens, one mistake is immediately followed by another. This one costs White a piece.

DP: *An untypical blunder.*

Untypical in the sense that Fortis was a strong player.

But White is in a difficult situation. It's not easy to find a good second move. For example, 8.Ke1/Bxc7? is bad because of 8...Qf4/Qxc7 (9.d5/dxc6? Bc5/Bxg1).

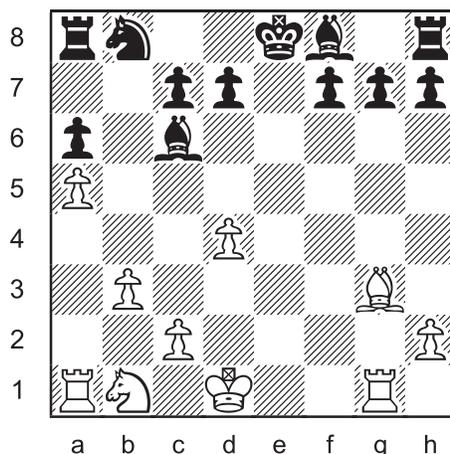
The best he can do is to concede another pawn with 8.Ke1/Bg3 Qxc2/Qxd1+! 9.Kxd1/Nd2, and there's still a lot of game left to play.

8...Qxd3/Qxd1+!

C/F: *Black has a material advantage (B + p).*

9.Kxd1/Bg3

Defending against 9...d6/dxe5.



9...Bd6/Bxg3

DP: *Ahead in material, Black naturally aims to simplify.*

The main purpose of this exchange is to defend against the dual threats of 10.Bxc7/Bg3 and 10.d5/dxc6.

10.Rxg3/Nc3

Now White threatens 11.d5/dxc6 and 11.Rxg7/Rg3.

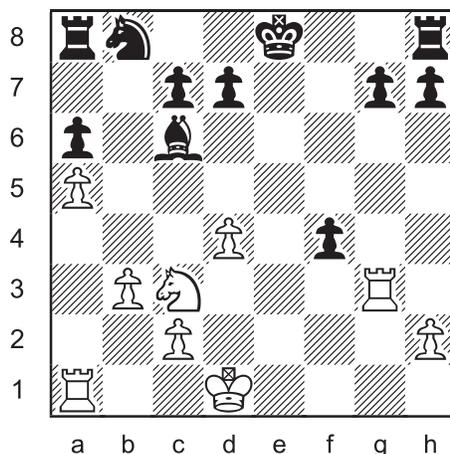
10...f5/f4

Given an exclamation by DP and C/F, but the moves, as good as they are, were played from a lack of reasonable alternatives.

Defending with 10...0-0/Bb7? is met by 11.Nd5/Nxc7! (11...Rc8/Rxc7? 12.Rc3/Rxc7!).

DP: *Hereon White has no adequate defence.*

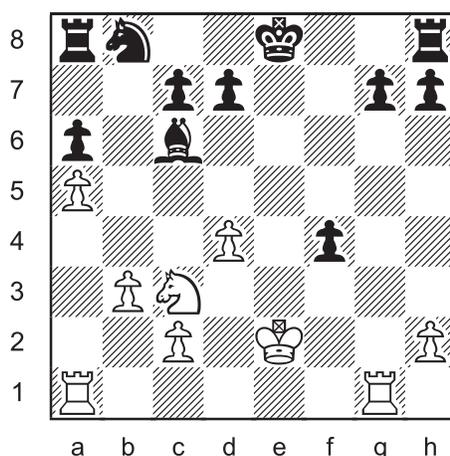
Which has been true since at least two turns ago. Although it may prove inadequate, White can still put up considerable resistance.



The advance of the black f-pawn is annoying, especially since the white rook must avoid light squares. But it doesn't help activate the black pieces and the advanced pawn may be vulnerable to capture later.

11.Rg1/Re1+?

Much better is 11.Rg1/Ke2! so that the king can go directly to the f-file. By freeing the rook on a1, White threatens 12.Rxg7/Rag1, as well as 12.d5/dxc6. Black continues to suffer from an undeveloped queenside. Things are tricky. Check out the position after 11.Rg1/Ke2. Can you find a convincing plan for converting Black's material advantage?



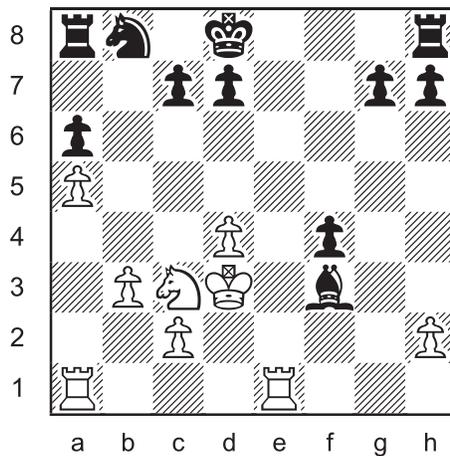
- 11...0-0/Re8+ 12.Kf2/h4
 - 12...Bb7/d6 13.Rae1/Rxe8+ Kf7/Kxe8 14.Rxg7/Rg1
 - 12...Re3/Rxc3? 13.Rg3xc3
- 11...0-0/Bb7 12.Kf2/Rae1
 - 12...d6/Nd7? 13.Re7/Rgxc7+
 - 12...Re8/Rxe1 13.Rxe1/h4
- 11...0-0/f3+ 12.Kf2/Rae1
- 11...Bb7/Kf7? 12.Raf1/Rxf4+
- 11...Bb7/Kd8? 12.Rxg7/Rag1
- 11...Bg2/f3+? 12.Kf2/Rae1+

11...Kd8/Bf3+!

A standard stratagem in Marseillais chess. Give check to limit the opponent's next turn to "one move".

12.Kd2/Kd3

Without anything more constructive to do, White uses his second move to guard d4.



White threatens to win the bishop by 13.Rf1/Rxf3.

12...Bg2/f3

Given an exclamation by C/F.

DP: *Probably not a good idea to lock in the bishop.*

So which is it? (! or ?!)

There are plenty of alternatives to 12...Bg2/f3, and no shortage of complicated lines to calculate.

12...g5/h6 13.h4/Rg1

12...Bg4/Bf5+

13.Kd2/Rg1

13...f3/f2? 14.Ne4/Nxf2

13...Ke7/Kf7

13.Ke2/Kf2 g5/h6 14.h4/Rg1

12...c5/cxd4

13.Re3/Rxf3 dxc3/Nc6 14.Rxf4/Rff1 d5/d4

13.Kxd4/Rg1 Re8/Nc6+ 14.Kd3/Rxg7 d5/Re3+

12...Re8/Rxe1 13.Rxe1/Rg1

12...Bb7/d6 13.Re7/Rxg7 Rg8/Rxg7 14.Rg1/Rxg7

12...Bb7/f3 13.Ke3/Kf2

The more I analyze this position, the further I get from any definite evaluation. But it is clear that White usually gets his counterplay from a rook on the g-file. One merit of Alekhine's choice is that the bishop on g2 closes that file. So, if 12...Bg2/f3 leads to a simple straightforward win, which it does, then I vote in favour of the exclamation.

13.Ke3/Kf2

Obviously White must stop 13...f2/fxe1=Q+.

13...Nc6/Nxd4

A happy moment for the black knight. Breathing fresh air and threatening both white rooks.

14.Ne2/Nxd4

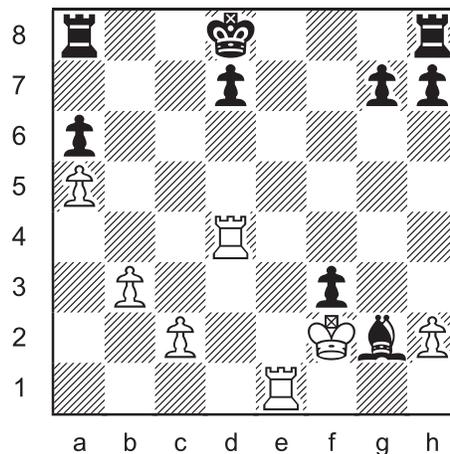
The knight must be eliminated.

14...c5/cxd4

By a forceful sequence of moves, Black has succeeded in simplifying the position and freeing his queen rook.

15.Rad1/Rxd4

If 15.c3/cxd4, then 15...Kc7/Kd6, followed by trading rooks. (Not 15...Re8/Rxe1? 16.Rxe1/Re3!)



15...Re8/Rxe1

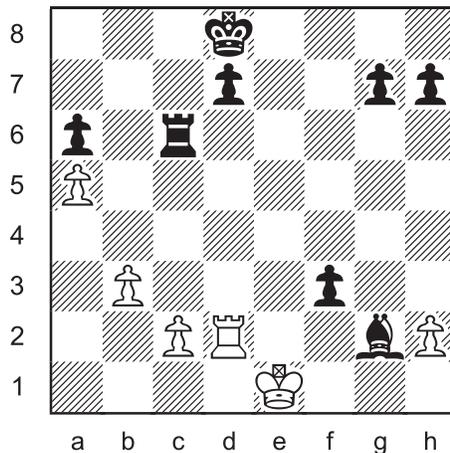
16.Kxe1/Rd2

Looking to *grab and go* on g2.

Black can easily defend against this “threat” with 16...Rc8/Bh3 (17.Rg2/Rxg7 Rxc2/Re2+ or 17.Kf2/Kxf3 Rxc2/Rxd2 18.Ke3/Kxd2 Kc7/Kc6).

It’s unlikely that Alekhine overlooked the possible capture on g2. It’s more plausible that he allows it as a means to simplify into a winning pawn endgame.

16...Rc8/Rc6!?



17.Rf2/Kd2

Given a ? by DP and C/F, but there is no good move here.

DP: *17.Rxg2/Rf2 would have prolonged resistance.*

17.Rxg2/Rf2 wins the bishop, but White has zero chance of holding the pawn ending that results after 17...Rxc2/Rxf2 18.Kxf2/Kxf3 Kc7/Kc6. Two sample lines:

19.Ke4/Kd4 Kb5/Kxa5 20.Kc4/b4+ Ka4/d5+!

19.Ke4/Ke5 Kb5/Kxa5 20.Kd6/Kxd7 Kb4/Kxb3
21.Ke7/Kf7 g5/g4!

Fortis surely realized the futility of this endgame, which explains why he did not take on g2.

17.Rxg2/Rg1 meets a similar fate. 17...Rxc2/Re2+ 18.Kf1/Rg3 Rg2/Rxg3.

17...g5/Rd6+!

From here on, Black uses the *move/check* technique to finish things off quickly.

18.Ke3/c3

With only “one move” per turn, White has no time to capture on g2 or f3.

18...h5/Re6+

The end is near. 19.Kd3/b4 g4/Rd6+ 20.Ke3/c4 21.g3/gxf2.

Fortis resigns.

0-1

A disheartening loss for the champion of Marseille. A lucky escape for the man who would become world champion two years later. Of ordinary chess!

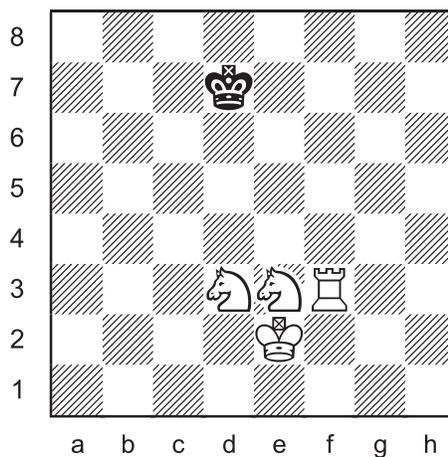
Sadly, Albert Fortis passed away the year after this game was played.



Alexander Alekhine

For anyone who stuck around, or skipped ahead, we have one more problem. It's a series-mate in seven by Eugene Albert of California. As in double whammies, only the final move may be check.

Multi-wham 19 (series-mate in 7)



White plays seven moves
in a row to mate Black

The composer, author of the *Ideal Mate Encyclopedia* (1999), turned 85 last week. Happy birthday, sir.

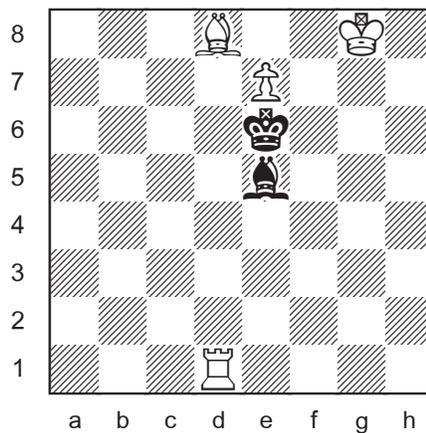
SOLUTIONS

All double whammies by J. Coakley, *ChessCafe.com* (2015).

One source gives Albert Fortis's year of birth as 1871 (instead of 1873).

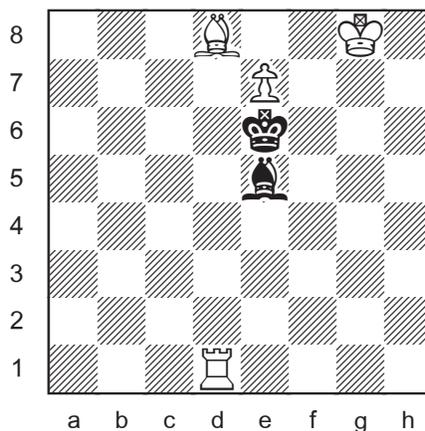
PDF hyperlinks. You can advance to the solution of any puzzle by clicking on the underlined title above the diagram. To return to the puzzle, click on the title above the solution diagram.

Double Whammy 47



1.e8=N
2.Ng7#

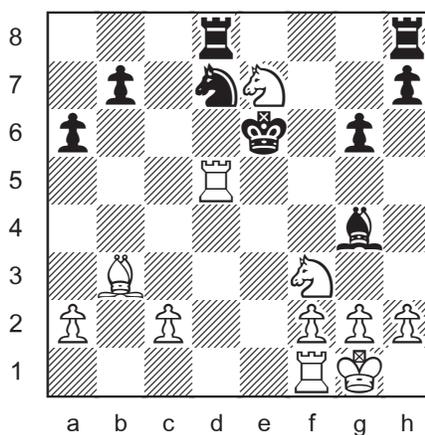
Double Whammy 48



1.e8=B
2.Bd7#

With a knight on e5, White promotes to a knight. With a bishop on e5, White promotes to a bishop.

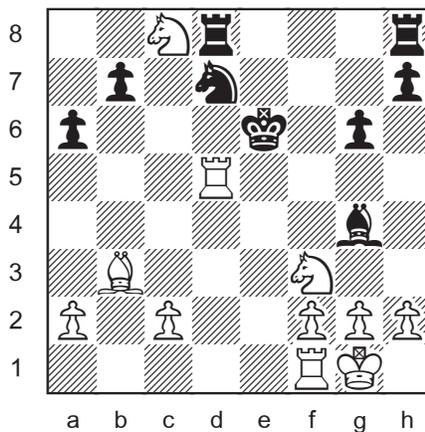
Double Whammy 49



- 1.Ng8
- 2.Ng5#

No discovered mate here.

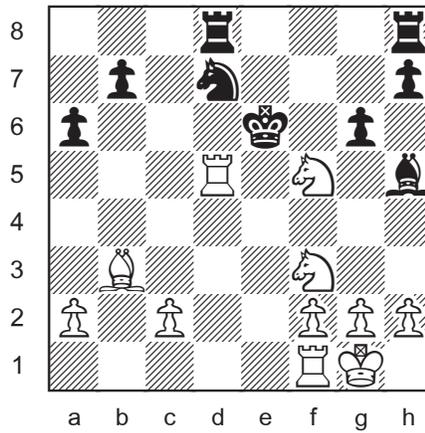
Double Whammy 50



- 1.Nh4
- 2.Rf5#

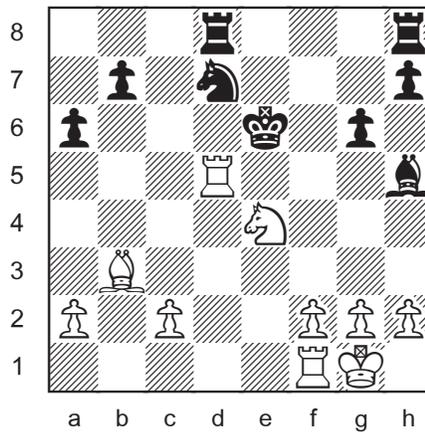
Tough enough?

Double Whammy 51



1.g4
2.Rd6#

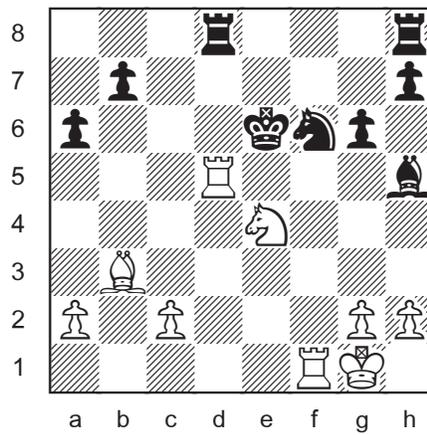
Double Whammy 52



1.f4
2.Re5#

In this and the remaining twins, White is reduced to a single knight on e4.

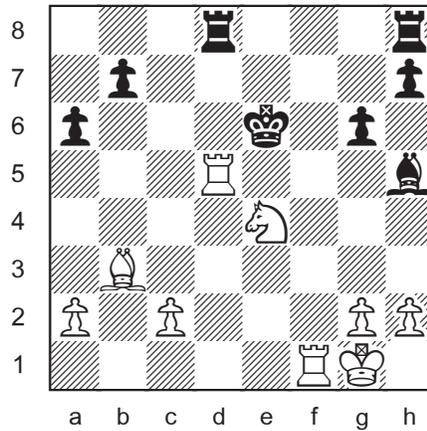
Double Whammy 53



1.Re1
2.Ng5#

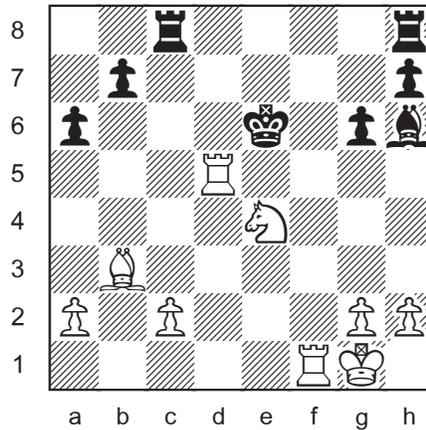
The white rook abandons the open f-file to set up a discovered check next door.

Double Whammy 54



1.Rf7
2.Ng5#

Double Whammy 55



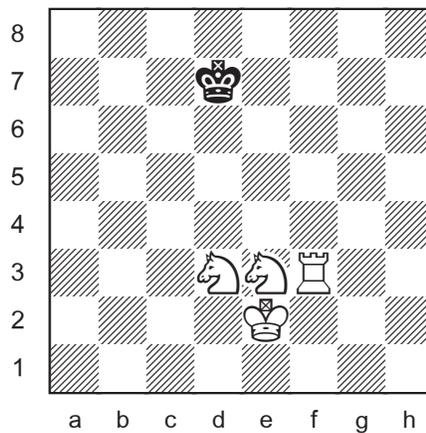
1.Rf7
2.Rc5#

The double rook hammer.

Multi-wham 19 (series-mate in 7)

Eugene Albert 1992

Ideal-Mate Review 43



1.Rf8
2.Nf5
3.Ke3
4.Kd4
5.Kc5
6.Kb6
7.Nc5#

Until next time!

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