

simply because the other was not able to find the only way to checkmate him within the available number of moves (or even because no way actually existed). A typical task would be that white mates in 6 moves - mate is certain but if given in 7 moves, or in 5, the wager is lost. Of course, one can then choose black but if the other player checkmates in 6, the wager is lost again.

In many cases, unorthodox conditions, or pieces, appeared. Sometimes the task to be performed was very unusual compared with habits of today; for instance, forcing a difficult mate in 3 moves when various checkmates could easily be given in 2.

### Original compositions

An important consequence of the different kind of task involved is the contrary approach to original compositions with respect to modern times. Today, a new chess composition is the more appreciated, the more it is original, containing elements and/or ideas never seen before. Let us consider the same thing from the point of view of the old players and gamblers of chess endings. An original composition, entirely new, would have encountered a suspicious attitude: nobody would wager anything on a fully unknown position or condition!

As a matter of fact, the basic art in the composition of these endings was to introduce very minor changes in known positions. A typical situation is known from previous examples; a player remembers the *correct* sequence of moves and assumes that he will reconstruct the way for winning the stake; on the contrary, the whole position has been displaced by one row, or a single pawn added somewhere, or a piece slightly misplaced; the consequence is that, for instance, the *usual* mate in 3 finds here a countermove and now requires no less than 4 moves - and the bet is lost.

The usual way adopted by a master to teach the technical knowledge accumulated in the course of centuries appears to be the following: in this position you have to select black, since mate cannot be given owing to, for instance, the defence by the new queen jumping to the third square. Should you chose white (or red, as often named), you have to locate, for instance, an additional pawn on the left of the king in order that mate can be given. This is a current situation among these endings: two endings offered instead of one. They could even be more than two; they could be slightly different from a book to another.

It is not correct to approach these variants with our taste for original versions - we might be tempted to reduce one thousand of en-