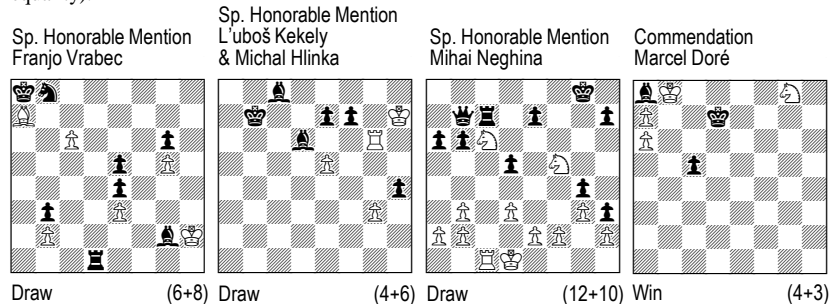


5...Rd8+ 6.Kg7 Rd7+ (6...Rg8+ 7.Kh7 Rxc3 8.a7 +-) **7.Kh6 Bc4 8.Bg4 Bxa6 9.Sf7 Bf1 10.Kh5 Ba6 11.Kh4 Bf1 12.Bf4 Ba6 13.Kg3 Bf1 14.Kf2 Ba6 15.Bg3 Bd3 16.Bxd7+ Kxd7 17.Se5 +-.** Notable "travel" of the white king, and in particular the thematic tries. If Black avoids the pin of his rook, there is more than one alternative to win. A study difficult to solve in any competition with limited time.

Honorable Mention - (Steffen S. Nielsen & Martin Minski - E0324) 1.Bh4+! (1.d7/Bf6? Ra2! +, or 1.Kc2? Sb5! +) **1...Kxh4 2.e7 Sf2+ [2...Ra1+ 3.Kc2 Ra2+ 4.Kc1! Re2 5.Se6! Sf2 6.Sf4! (6.e8Q? Sxd3+ 7.Kd1 Rd2+ mate) 6...Sxd3+ 7.Sxd3 Sc6 8.Sf4 Re1+ 9.Kc2 Kg5 10.Sd5 Sd4+ 11.Kxc3 Sb5+ 12.Kd2 =] 3.Kc2 Ra2+ 4.Kxc3 Re2 5.Se6! Sb5+ (5...Rxe6 6.d7 =) 6.Kh3! Sxd6 7.e8Q! Sxe8 8.Sd4 Re1/Re5/Rd2 (8...Re3/Re7 9.Sf5+) 9.Sf3 =.** With a nice key and an interesting complementary line, domination is shown (not very common to achieve equality).

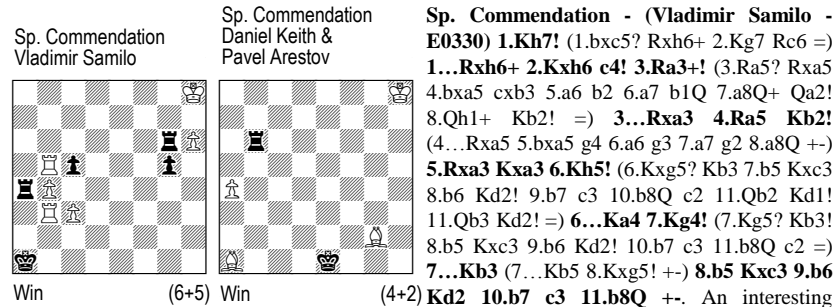


Sp. Honorable Mention - (Franjo Vrabec - E0326) 1.c7! Rh1+ 2.Kg3! [2.Kxg2? Rh8 3.cxb8Q+ Rxb8 4.Bxb8 Kxb8 5.Kh2 Kb7 6.Kg2 Kb6 7.Kf2 Kc7 8.Ke2 Kd6 9.Kd2 Ke6 10.Kc3 Kf5 11.Kxb3 Kg4 12.Kc2 (12.Kc3 Kxg5 13.Kc4 Kf5 14.Kd5 g5 15.b4 g4 16.b5 g3 17.b6 g2 18.b7 g1Q 19.b8Q Qd1+ 20.Kc5 Qc1+ 21.Kd6 Qa3+ 22.Kd7 Qxe3 +-) 12...Kxg5 +-] **2...Rh3+ 3.Kf2! Rf3+ 4.Kg1! Rf1+ 5.Kh2! Rh1+ 6.Kg3! Rh8 7.cxb8Q+ Rxb8 8.Bxb8 Kxb8 9.Kxg2 Kc7 10.Kh1!!** (10.Kf2? Kd7! +) **10...Kc6** (10...Kd7 11.Kh2 Kc6 12.Kg1 =) **11.Kg1 Kd5 12.Kf2 Kc4** (12...Ke6 13.Kg3 Kf5 14.Kh4 =) **13.Ke2 =.** An appropriate and ingenious introduction to arrive at pawns ending, which can be seen in configurations by the Hungarian composer K.Ebersz, which contain precise technical movements of the white king.

Sp. Honorable Mention - (L'uboš Kekely & Michal Hlinka - E0329) 1.Rg5! (1.exd6? fxe6 2.dxe7 Bd7 3.gxh4 Be8 4.Kg7 Kc6 5.Kf8 Kd7 -) **1...f6!** (1...h3 2.exd6 exd6 3.Kg7 Kc6 4.Kxf7 d5 5.Rg8 =) **2.exf6** (2.Rg7/Rg8? fxe5 3.gxh4 e4 +, or 2.Rh5? Bxe5 -) **2...exf6 3.Rg7+ (3.Rb5+? Kc6 -) 3...Kc6 4.gxh4 Bf5+ 5.Kh6!** (5.Kg8? Be6+ 6.Kh7 f5 7.Rg6 Kd5 8.Rg1 f4 -+, or 5.Kh8? Bd3! 6.h5 f5 7.Rg2 Kd5 +) **5...Bf8** (5...Bf4+ 6.Kh5 =) **6.h5!** (Thematic try 6.Kh5? Kd6! (6...Bxg7? stalemate) 7.Rb7 Be7! 8.Kh6 Be4 9.Ra7 Bf8+ 10.Kh5 Ke6! -) **6...Kd5** stalemate. Entertaining study with thematic try and culminating in a stalemate.

Sp. Honorable Mention - (Mihai Neghina - E0321) 1.Sxe7+! (1.b4? Rxc6 2.Rxc6 Qd7 -+; 1.Sfd4? e5 2.Sxe5 Rxc1+ 3.Kxc1 Qc8+ -) **1...Kf8** (1...Rxe7 2.Rc8+ Kf7 3.Sd6+) **2.Sg6+ (2.Rxc7 Qxc7 3.Sg6+ Ke8 -) 2...hxg6 (2...Kg8 3.Sge7+ =; 2...Ke8 3.Sd6+) 3.Rxc7 (3.Sd4? Rxc1+ 4.Kxc1 Qf7 -) 3...Qxc7 4.Sd4 Qe5 5.e3 b5 6.a3 Kf7 7.Kd2 Qb8 8.Kd1 a5 9.Kd2 a4 10.b4 =** Inspired by V.Chekover 1947 study. Fortress of the White, which achieves equality with remarkable sacrifice.

Commendation - (Marcel Doré - E0333) 1.Sf6+! [Thematic try: 1.Se7? c4! 2.Sc8 c3! (2...Bh1? 3.Sb6+ Kd8 4.Sxc4 +-) 3.Sb6+ Kd6!! (3...Kd8? 4.Sxa8! +- see main line) 4.Sxa8 c2 5.Sc7 c1Q 6.Sb5+ Kd7 7.a8Q Qc8+ 8.Ka7 Qc5+ positional draw] **1...Kd8 2.Se8 c4 3.Sc7!** (3.Kxa8? Ke8 4.Sd6+ Kc7 5.Sxc4 Kc8! =) **3...c3!** (3...Bh1? 4.Se6+! and White wins easily, e.g. 4...Ke7 5.Sc5 Kd8 6.Sb7+ +-) **4.Sxa8!** (4.Kxa8? Kc7! 5.Sd5+ Kc8 6.Sxc3 Kc7! =) **4...c2 5.Sc7** (switchback) **5...c1Q 6.Se6+! Kd7 7.a8Q Qc8+ 8.Ka7 +-.** (Perpetual check is not possible for black with the Knight on e6; see thematic try 1.Se7?). An interesting miniature with appropriate tries.



Sp. Commendation - (Daniel Keith & Pavel Arestov - E0327) 1.a5! [1.Bc3+? Ke2! 2.a5 Rd6! 3.Be5 (3.Bb7 Rd8+ 4.Kg7 Rd7+ =) 3...Re6 4.Bc3 (4.Bc7 Re8+ 5.Kg7 Re7+ =, or 4.Bd4? Rh6+ 5.Kg7 Rh4 6.Bb6 Rg4+ =) 4...Rd6! 5.Kg7 Rd3! 6.Be5 (6.Bb4 Rg3+ =) 6...Ra3! 7.Bc7 Rc3 8.Bd6 (8.Bb6 Rg3+ =) 8...Rd3 9.Be5 Ra3 positional draw] **1...Rb5** (1...Rh6+ 2.Kg7 +, or 1...Rb8+ 2.Kh7 Kf2 3.Bc6 +-) **2.Bc3+!** (2.a6? Rh5+! 3.Kg7 Rg5+ =) **2...Kd1!** (2...Ke2 3.a6 Rh5+ 4.Kg7 Rg5+ 5.Kf7 Rxc2 6.a7 +, or 2...Kf2 3.Bc6! Rc5 4.Bd4+ +-) **3.Bc6!** (3.a6? Rh5+! 4.Kg7 Rg5+ 5.Kf7 Rxc2 6.a7 Ra2 =) **3...Rc5 4.Ba4+** (4.Bf3+? Kc2 5.Bb4 Rb5 6.Be1 Re5 =) **4...Kc1 5.Bb4 Rc4 6.Ba3+ Kb1 7.Bd7!** (7.Be8? Rc8 =, or 7.Bb5? Rh4+! 8.Kg7 Rh5 =) **7...Rd4** (7...Rc7 8.Bb5 Ra7 9.a6 +-) **8.Bf5+** (8.Bc6? Rc4 9.Bb5 Rh4+ 10.Kg7 Rh5 =) **8...Ka2 9.Bc5!** (9.Be7? Ra4 10.Bd8 Kb3 11.Bc8 Re4 12.a6 Re8+ =) **9...Ra4** (9...Rd5 10.Be6 +-) **10.Bb6 Kb3 11.Bd3!** (11.Kg7 Kb4 =) **11...Kc3** (11...Kb4 12.a6 Kc3 13.Bf1 +-) **12.Bb5!** (12.Bf1? Rf4 13.Be2 Re4 14.Bb5 Kb4! =) **12...Rb4** (12...Kb4 13.Bxa4 +-) **13.a6!** (13.Bf1? Rf4 14.Be2 Re4 =) **13...Rxb5 14.a7 Rxb6 15.a8Q +- [A].** A valuable find, and/or adaptation of it, from a position containing six pieces. Surely, this is the result of research. The study has many unambiguous lines meriting a distinction.

We thank Mario for this timely award which stays open for three months. Please send comments to Franjo Vrabec.

StrateGems 2017 Helpmates h#n Award

by Emmanuel Manolas

Twenty-nine helpmates h#n (n>3) were published in the year 2017. Twenty-five composers from sixteen countries have created mostly good compositions. The lack of economy in some compositions left them out of the award.

My ranking is as follows:

