

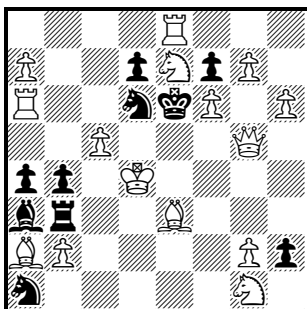
## Chapter 15 The Babson Task

15.1 Paragraph 10.13 told the story of the two-move record for the number of Black interferences, tracing it over the years to its culmination in the 10 interferences of **516†**. This chapter tells the broader story of a major task, showing its development across more than one type of problem. The Babson task is the most striking in the whole field of pawn promotion, requiring that in four parallel variations Black AUW on a single square should lead to matching White AUW on a single square.

### *Selfmates*

15.2 The task originated in three-move selfmate form, taking its name from the American composer Joseph Ney Babson (1852-1929). In 1914, when he was already over sixty, he had published **838\***, in which the Black promotions are on one square but the White are spread over three. That apart, the construction is excellent and many of the basic mechanisms of the task are introduced. There is a set selfmate by either Bxb2 or Sc2, provided that Black's promoted piece can be got rid of. In the Q variation the BQ is either grabbed or forced itself to mate on e4 or e5, and the WQ is needed to achieve this. In the R and B variations White's underpromotions are sufficient for the grab, whereas a WQ would put an unwanted guard on c2 after capturing on h7 or g2. In the S variation the WS puts a guard on the BK's field, thus relieving the WQ to complete the grab, whereas 2.Se2 would put an unwanted guard on c3. Eleven years later Babson reduced the promoting WPs to two in **839** at the cost of a strong (but thematic) underpromotion key. The mechanism of the Q variation is slightly different: in the two cases where the BQ cannot be grabbed it is not itself compelled to mate, but it puts a guard on the WK's field which allows the WQ to force mate by another Black piece.

## 838\*) J. N. Babson

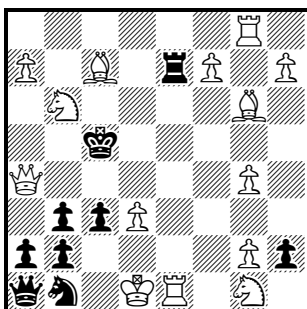
1st Prize, *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, 1914

S#3

1.Ph7

|                                 |                   |                 |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1...Ph1=Q                       | 2.Pa8=Q Qxg2,Qxh7 | 3.Qe4+ Qxe4     |
|                                 | Qh2,Qh5           | 3.Qe5+ Qxe5     |
|                                 | Q else            | 3.xQ Sc2,Bxb2   |
| 1...Ph1=R                       | 2.Ph8=R hR any    | 3.xR Sc2,Bxb2   |
| 1...Ph1=B                       | 2.Pa8=B Bxg2      | 3.Bxg2 Sc2,Bxb2 |
| 1...Ph1=S                       | 2.Pg8=S hS any    | 3.xS Sc2,Bxb2   |
| If 1...Pxc1=any 2.Bxg1 Sc2,Bxb2 |                   |                 |

## 839) J. N. Babson

*American Chess Bulletin*, 1925

S#3

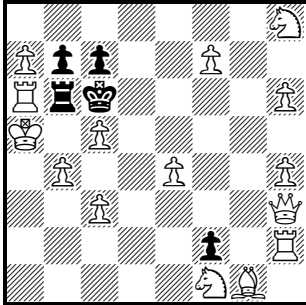
1.Pf8=B

|                                     |                  |                     |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| 1...Ph1=Q                           | 2.Ph8=Q Qxg2,Qh6 | 3.Qxc3+ Sxc3        |
|                                     | Q else           | 3.xQ Sd2,Sa3, Pc2   |
| 1...Ph1=R                           | 2.Ph8=R hR any   | 3.xR Sd2,Sa3, Pc2   |
| 1...Ph1=B                           | 2.Pa8=B Bxg2     | 3.Bxg2 Sd2,Sa3, Pc2 |
| 1...Ph1=S                           | 2.Pa8=S Sg3      | 3.Bxg3 Sd2,Sa3, Pc2 |
| If 1...Pxc1=any 2.Rxg1 Sd2,Sa3, Pc2 |                  |                     |

15.3 Problem **839** inspired Alain White to announce a 'Babson Task problem contest' with a \$20 prize for a setting with a single promoting WP and an extra \$5 for an underpromotion key. First prize went to the famous **840\***. This beautiful and almost wholly accurate setting uses the same mechanisms as **838\*** except that the underpromotion to WB is forced not because a WQ would put a guard on the intended selfmate but because it would itself give mate on c5. A second tourney followed with the challenge to avoid capturing promotions, the so-called 'perfect Babson', and the winner this time was **841**. This achieved its objective with an elegant setting and a flight-square, but with a very strong key, similar mechanisms to **840\*** and the same paucity of different mates.

840\*) H. W. Bettmann

1st Prize, Babson Task Tourney, 1926



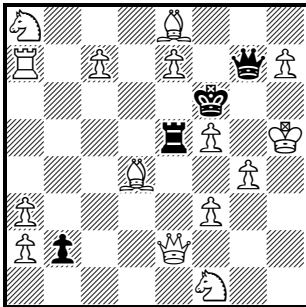
S#3

1.Pa8=B

|            |         |            |        |      |
|------------|---------|------------|--------|------|
| 1...Pxc1=Q | 2.Pf8=Q | Qxc5,Qxf1+ | 3.Pb5+ | Qxb5 |
|            |         | Q else     | 3.xQ   | Rxa6 |
| 1...Pxc1=R | 2.Pf8=R | gR any     | 3.xR   | Rxa6 |
| 1...Pxc1=B | 2.Pf8=B | B any      | 3.xB   | Rxa6 |
| 1...Pxc1=S | 2.Pf8=S | S any      | 3.xS   | Rxa6 |

841) K. Nielsen

1st Prize , 2nd Babson Task Tourney, 1928



S#3

1.Ph8=Q

|           |         |           |        |      |
|-----------|---------|-----------|--------|------|
| 1...Pb1=Q | 2.Pc8=Q | Qc1,Qxf5+ | 3.Pg5+ | Qxg5 |
|           |         | bQ else   | 3.xQ   | Qxh8 |
| 1...Pb1=R | 2.Pc8=R | bR any    | 3.xR   | Qxh8 |
| 1...Pb1=B | 2.Pc8=B | B any     | 3.xB   | Qxh8 |
| 1...Pb1=S | 2.Pc8=S | S any     | 3.xS   | Qxh8 |
| 1...Kxe7  | 2.Bc5+  | Kf6       | 3.Qxb2 | Qxh8 |

*Direct Mates*

15.4 The task proved, as usual, far more difficult to achieve in direct mate form, and was long thought to be impossible. At least four moves are required. The basic pattern is similar to that in the selfmate form, with a greater variety of mechanisms to compel the promotion to WS. One important and necessary difference is that, whereas in selfmate form the reason for the underpromotions to WR and WB is that a WQ would frustrate the selfmate by direct guard or check, in direct mate form the reason is that a WQ would lead to stalemate.

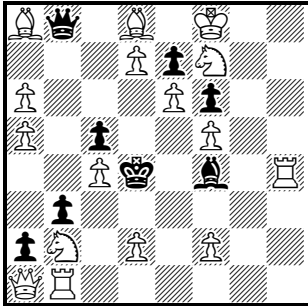
15.5 In 1965 Pierre Drumare published a position with Black to move, which showed the task provided Black promoted his pawn, but there was no White key and no answer to other first moves by Black. The following year he published a problem with three matching promotions to Q, R and B, but after Black

promoted to S White could make any promotion. In 1972 Bo Lindgren published a five-mover with three WBs and with the WS promotion delayed until the final move whereas the other three White promotions followed immediately on Black's. In 1980 Drumare achieved the task in a five-mover with six extra promoted pieces, and in 1982 Peter Hoffmann did it in a four-mover with four extra promoted pieces.

15.6 In 1983 the Soviet composer Leonid Yarosh amazed the problem world by publishing no fewer than three four-movers showing the task correctly in direct-mate form. The pioneer with a bad key appeared in the March issue of *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, and the improved version **842\*\*** in the August issue. **842\*\*** has a miraculously quiet thematic key, followed by capturing promotions on matching squares and three full lines of rich byplay. In the Q variation the WQ is needed to cope with both Qxb2 and Qe4; in the R variation the WR is needed for Rxb2 3.Rxb3 (3.Qxb3 would be stalemate); in the B variation the WB is needed for Be4 3. Bxf4 (3.Qxf4 would be stalemate); and in the S variation the WS is needed for a White interference mate after the selfblock 3...Se4. The only significant blemish is the dual double checkmate at the end of the B variation: that apart, the rich solution contains 9 mates by 7 different men. Yarosh dedicated his third setting, **843**, to Pierre Drumare. It is another remarkable achievement, with a quite different matrix, a flight-square and the mainplay dual-free as defined in 1.31. But the strong key, only partly redeemed by the try 1.Pxd8=Q (>2.Rc4) Pc1=S!, takes a flight; the seven assorted threats do not make for clarity; and White's play is less varied than in **842\*\***. Among the other settings which quickly followed, including a fourth by Yarosh, **844** (which has some similarities to **843**) was the first perfect Babson in direct mate form. The key is indifferent and once again there is a dual double checkmate, but the matrix is embellished with two BK flights. By now there have been some twenty settings, and among them **845\*** is distinguished by having almost no duals in the mainplay — only minor ones after 3...Q~ in the Q variation — but also by its novel mechanisms in the B and S variations.

842\*\*) L. V. Yarosh

1st Prize, *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, 1983



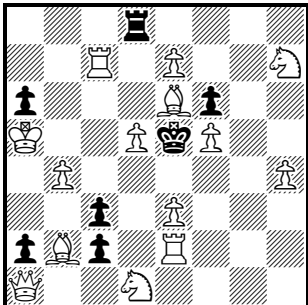
#4

1.Pa7 (>2.Pxb8=any)

|            |          |          |          |               |               |
|------------|----------|----------|----------|---------------|---------------|
| 1...Pxb1=Q | 2.Pxb8=Q | Qxb2     | 3.Qxb3   | Qxa1          | 4.Rxf4        |
| 1...Pxb1=R | 2.Pxb8=R | Rxb2     | 3.Rxb3   | Kxc4          | 4.Qa4         |
| 1...Pxb1=B | 2.Pxb8=B | Be4      | 3.Bxf4   | B any         | 4.Be3,<br>Be5 |
| 1...Pxb1=S | 2.Pxb8=S | Sxd2     | 3.Qc1    | Sf1           | 4.Rxf4        |
| 1...Qxa8   | 2.Rxf4+  | Qe4      | 3.Pa8=Q  | Se4           | 4.Sc6         |
| 1...Qxd8+  | 2.Kg7    | Pxb1=Q,B | 3.Rxf4+  | Qxf4,Pxb1=Q,B | 4.Qd5         |
| 1...Qe5    | 2.Bxe7   | Q checks | 3.KxQ    | Q,Be4         | 4.Rxe4        |
|            |          | Pxb1=Q,B | 3.Pd8=Q+ | Pxb1=Q,B      | 4.Pd8=Q       |
|            |          |          |          | Qd6           | 4.Qxd6        |
|            |          | Qd6      | 3.Sxd6   | Qd5           | 4.Qxd5        |
|            |          |          |          | Ke5           | 4.Sd3         |
| If 1...Qd6 | 2.Re1    |          |          |               |               |

843) L. V. Yarosh

1st Prize, *Thèmes-64*, 1983

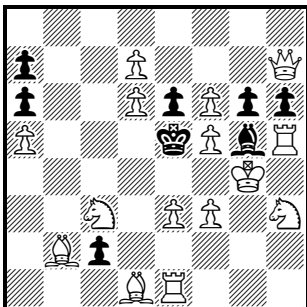


#4

|           |  |      |        |      |        |
|-----------|--|------|--------|------|--------|
| 1.Sxc3    | (>Pxd8=Q,B,S,<br>Sxa2+,Sxf6,<br>Qh1,Rc4) |      |        |      |        |
| 1...Pc1=Q | 2.Pxd8=Q                                 | Qxc3 | 3.Sxf6 | Qxb2 | 4.Qxb2 |
|           |  |      |        | Qd4  | 4.Bxd4 |
| 1...Pc1=R | 2.Pxd8=R                                 | Rxc3 | 3.Sxf6 | Kxf6 | 4.Bxc3 |
| 1...Pc1=B | 2.Pxd8=B                                 | Bxe3 | 3.Rc4  | Kd6  | 4.Se4  |
| 1...Pc1=S | 2.Pxd8=S                                 | Sb3+ | 3.Kb6  | any  | 4.Sf7  |
| 1...Rxd5+ | 2.Sxd5+                                  | Ke4  | 3.Qh1+ | Kd3  | 4.Sf4  |
| 1...Rd6   | 2.Sxa2+                                  | Ke4  | 3.Qh1+ | Kd3  | 4.Sc1  |
| 1...Rg8   | 2.Sxf6                                   |      |        |      |        |

## 844) G. Sakharov

Special Prize , '64', 1984

1.Pxg6 (>2.Pd8=Q,R,S,  
Qe7)

1...Pc1=Q 2.Pd8=Q

1...Pc1=R 2.Pd8=R

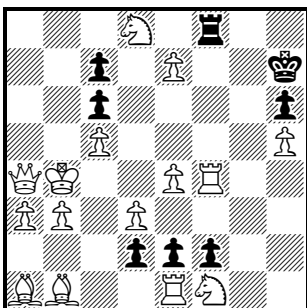
1...Pc1=B 2.Pd8=B

1...Pc1=S 2.Pd8=S

Qxd1 3.Sxg5 Qa4+,  
Qd4+ 4.gSe4  
Qxf3+ 4.Sxf3  
Pxc3 3.Sf4 Kxf6 4.Qh8  
Bxe3 3.Qxa7 Kxd6 4.Qc7  
Sd3 3.Sf7+ Kxf6 4.Se4,  
Sd5

#4

## 845\*) P. Hoffmann

*Die Schwalbe*, 1986 (Version by M. Tribowski)1.Rd1 (>2.Pxf8=Q,R,  
Rxf8)

1...Pe1=Q 2.Pxf8=Q

1...Pe1=R 2.Pxf8=R

1...Pe1=B 2.Pxf8=B

1...Pe1=S 2.Pxf8=S+

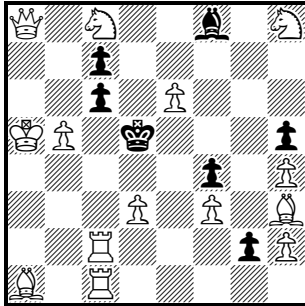
Qxe4+ 3.Pd4 Qf5 4.Bxf5  
Qb1 4.Rf7  
Rxe4+ 3.Pd4 Kg7 4.4Rf7  
Kg8 3.Qxc6 Kh7 4.Qg6  
Kg8 3.Ka5 S any 4.Qc4

#4

*Other Types*

15.7 It is perhaps surprising that the task has only been achieved rarely in stalemate form, but **846\*** is a fine example, with ten dual-free lines. The mechanisms are familiar, but the key is thematic and there are ingeniously differentiated lines when BQ and BR play to g4 and when BQ and BB play to e3 or d4.

**846\*) R. J. Millour**  
*The Problemist*, 1988

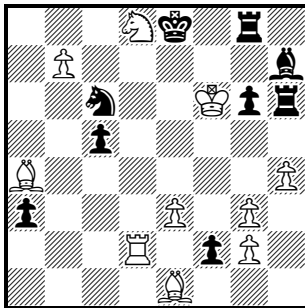


- 1.Pe7 (>Pxf8=Q,R,B,S)  
 1...Pg1=Q 2.Pxf8=Q Qd4,  
 Qe3 3.Qf5+ Qe5 4.Bxe5=  
 Qg3 3.Pxg3 Pxg3 4.Rg2=  
 Qg4 3.Qf5+ Qxf5 4.Bxf5=  
 Qg8 3.Qf7+ Qxf7 4.Sxf7=  
 Rg3 3.Pxg3 Pxg3 4.Rg2=  
 Rg4 3.Rc5+ Ke6 4.Pxc6=  
 Bd4,  
 Be3 3.Rc5+ Bxc5 4.Bxc5=  
 Sxh3 3.Sf7 Sf2 4.Rxf2=  
 Sg1 4.Rxg1=  
 Sg5 4.Sxg5=

=4

15.8 The Babson task has also been shown, more easily but less interestingly, in many more heterodox forms of problem. I will give two examples from the selfmate family. The early **847** is a maximummer selfmate, in which Black (but not White) must always play his geometrically longest available move or moves. The mechanisms are virtually the same as in **838\***, with a neat use of the maximummer restriction in the R variation. **848\*** was the second setting in reflex mate form, a selfmate with the added condition that either side must mate on the move if this becomes possible. The waiting key prevents Black escaping by 1...Kd7 2. Pf8=S Kc6!, and the task is beautifully accomplished by combining the need to avoid a double guard on f3 with the need to avoid mate by White.

**847) T. R. Dawson**  
*The Gambit*, 1928

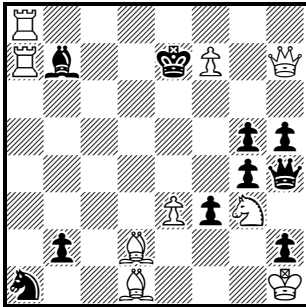


- 1.Ph5  
 1...Pxe1=Q 2.Pb8=Q Qa1+ 3.Qe5+ Qxe5  
 1...Pxe1=R 2.Pb8=R Ra1 3.Rb1 Pxb5  
 1...Pxe1=B 2.Pb8=B Bxg3 3.Bxg3 Pxb5  
 1...Pxe1=S 2.Pb8=S eS any 3.xS Pxb5

S#3 Max

848\*) M. Mladenovic

1st Prize, *The Problemist* Babson Theme Tourney, 1989-1990



R#3

- |                 |                      |         |      |
|-----------------|----------------------|---------|------|
| 1.Pf8=B+? K any | 2.Qf5                |         |      |
| 1.Pf8=S+? Kf6   | 2.Bc3                |         |      |
| 1.Sf5+? Kd7     | 2.Bxf3 Kc7           | 3.Rxb7  |      |
| 1.Bxf3? Pb1=R+  | 2.Be1/Sf1 Rxe1+/Qe1! |         |      |
| 1.Rc8 block     |                      |         |      |
| 1...Pb1=Q       | 2.Pf8=Q+ Ke6         | 3.Qxf3  | Bxf3 |
|                 | (not 2.Pf8=R? Qxh7!) |         |      |
| 1...Pb1=R       | 2.Pf8=R+ K any       | 3.Rxf3  | Bxf3 |
|                 | (not                 |         |      |
|                 | 2.Pf8=Q+? Ke6        | 3.hQf5) |      |
| 1...Pb1=B       | 2.Pf8=B+ K any       | 3.Bxf3  | Bxf3 |
| 1...Pb1=S       | 2.Pf8=S+ K any       | 3.Bxf3  | Bxf3 |
| 1...Kd7,        |                      |         |      |
| S any           | 2.Pf8=S+ K any       | 3.Bxf3  | Bxf3 |