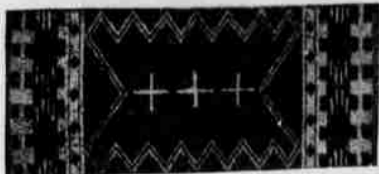


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AUCTION BRIDGE EVOLVING

Without Question the New Game will
Entirely Supplant the Old.

PINEHURST has seldom taken hold of any card game with more zest than the new auction bridge. Mr. Becker's story on the game exhausted the edition of THE OUTLOOK in which it was printed inside of two weeks and since that time several hundred requests for copies have been received. The latest indication of its permanent popularity is its gradual development as shown by the fact that the value of the rubber is steadily being reduced.

When H. H. Ward of Boston, captain of the champion American Club team and famous as the best bridge player in the United States, first took up auction he kept careful records of the results. He found that the average value of all the rubbers played during one month early last year was a gain of 650 points for the winners as against an average gain of 170 in bridge. Since that time he has found that with the growing experience of the players, the better understanding between partners and a more systematic study of the tactics of the game the value of the rubber has been steadily and surely reduced, until now it is very little more than double that of the average in bridge, ranging between 400 and 450 points.

The greatest element of loss at auction is easily traceable to the misunderstandings of partners in the bidding. Instead of supporting each other in the scheme which is best suited to their hands beginners are continually working at cross purposes. One of the chief attractions of auction bridge is that you can get all there is to it out of your cards if you manage them well and if your partner does not step in and spoil it all. When you have very good hands you can play them for all they are worth, and if they are pretty bad you can frequently, by judicious bidding, coax the adversaries to undertake with their good cards just one trick more than they are able to get, and so defeat a declaration. In bridge you win nothing unless you get the odd trick yourself. In auction you may get only three or four tricks out of the thirteen and still score all there is to score on that deal.

But nothing is so annoying, after you have cautiously jollied your adversaries along until they have undertaken to make three tricks in hearts when two in hearts is all their hands are really worth, as to have your partner step in and overbid their three hearts, under the mistaken idea that you wanted to play the hand yourself. The fundamental difficulty in auction bridge was soon discovered to be the initial bid by the dealer. So forcibly was this brought home to many good players that it was suggested to abolish the rule compelling him to make a bid of some kind; but that would spoil one of the fine points of the game and make many deals void. The trouble is not that the dealer cannot declare on his

own cards but that it is so necessary for his partner to be able to distinguish between bids that are merely waiting bids and those that are invitation bids. In the first class the dealer wants to come in again and show his true colors after he has heard what others have to say; in the second class he wants to induce his partner to make the real declaration, especially no trumps.

The first theory of the game was for the dealer to declare one spade when he was not strong enough to call a red suit or no trumps. A bid of one trick in any other suit meant winning cards in that suit, not length, and one in clubs usually meant at least three sure tricks in it, but not enough outside to go no trumps. The penalty being then unlimited, the second hand always passed a spade bid and if the dealer's partner did not say something the fourth hand would pass also unless he had a sure game hand, and they would let the dealer struggle with his spade make. No matter how good the hands held by the adversaries their strength was infinitely better employed in defeating spades at 50 points a trick than in winning upon any declaration of their own, because the spade maker was always giving them odds of 25 to 1 and could not possibly go game himself.

To remedy this the committee on laws decided to limit the losses on an original bid of one spade, whether doubled or not, to 100 points. This completely knocked the bottom out of the tactics of the "maurers," who sat tight and said nothing when one spade was bid. The opportunities for picking up penalties of 400 or 500 points at a time suddenly and permanently disappeared. When the dealer bid one spade and his partner had nothing the partner said nothing, and between them they were very glad to get off so cheaply as to lose only 100 points in honors, their adversaries scoring nothing towards game.

The adversaries soon found that it was not worth while to waste their strength on such small gains. The only remedy they had was to get into the bidding themselves, and so sure was the dealer that they would bid something if they had the strength and third hand passed, that the dealer took advantage of the new conditions of things thus brought about, and gradually got into the habit of bidding one spade as a starter, no matter what he had, confident that he would have an opportunity to bid on the full value of his hand when it came around to him again. Instead of bidding one spade on nothing at all, the dealer would bid one spade on anything short of seven or eight sure tricks in his own hand, without any assistance from his partner. It was only when he feared that no one else had anything that he bid freely himself.

This evolved another complication, because when the adversaries knew that one spade did not mean weakness they passed, and left the dealer to play his big hands with nothing but spades

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