

The Complete Auction Player

By
Florence Irwin

With a New Special Chapter, General Outline of Play, and
a Complete Summary of All the Points of the Game
Condensed for Quick Reference

Together with The Laws of Auction, The Etiquette of the
Game, and the Latest Decisions

New and Enlarged Edition

G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York and London
The Knickerbocker Press

795 ✓
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PREFACE

AUCTION freakishness and Auction hysteria have happily almost passed away, leaving in their wake a beautiful standard game—a game tried, perfected, approved. I do not claim that all Auction players play this game; but I certainly do claim that they all *should*, and that all the good ones *do*. I have played in three languages and with men and women from most of the civilized countries on the globe, and I can confidently assert that—aside from a few trifling differences of opinion—the best players everywhere play the same game. Localisms and temporary fads have passed into disuse.

Such being the case, it is fitting that a handbook of the standard game be presented, and I offer this little volume. In its pages, I have endeavored to prepare a correct path for the feet of the veriest beginner, as well as to guide already practiced players to heights of excellence. Annexed, will be found a condensed Summary of every point of the

game; for hasty reference it should prove highly useful. Also annexed, are the latest American Laws—those arbiters of all disputed points of right and etiquette.

It is my firm belief that a player who has digested the contents of this book, and has thereto added the information carried in its companion volume, *Master-Auction*, will be able successfully to match skill against any player, of any grade, in any country, and under any flag.

F. I.

HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON, NEW YORK,

FOREWORD

WHEN the Great Tragedy overtook the world, it immediately belittled all else. With a gasp of dismay, we looked back on our former normal occupations and amusements; even though innocent, even though intelligent, they had a way of suddenly sinking into insignificance and of seeming to lose all *raison d'être*.

Then, one winter day in 1916, the post brought me a letter from a boy whom I had never seen, of whom I had never even heard. He was English, and he wrote from the East African trenches. "We're in the front line," he said, "and Fritz is mighty near. Every night there's a sortie. The heat, though, is the hardest thing to bear. We try to forget it by playing Auction, and by studying the hands in your latest book. I wonder if it would trouble you too much to explain something on page ——"

Think of it! Out in those fiery trenches, and finding solace in the pages that I wrote

in comfort and safety! Do you think that it "troubled me too much" to answer that letter by return post? Do you need to be told that I sent every interesting hand, every scrap of Auction news, that I could muster? Six months it took for my letter to go and the answer to come. The boy wrote the very day he heard from me. He told me that my letter and its enclosures were going all up and down the trenches. The Colonel was even then playing some of the hands. "I'm as proud as a peacock," wrote my unknown boy. "They all said I was a donkey to write—that you'd never bother to answer. And as I want to send you something, and have nothing else here, I hope you won't mind getting my picture!"

From then on, our letters went regularly back and forth. Such vivid descriptions of battles I have never read as those he wrote me—night battles in a bush country, with the heat so terrific as to make plain thirst seem the most horrible suffering of all. But never one letter did I get that did not eagerly demand Auction news. "It takes our minds off the mess, and gives us something jolly to think about." In the trenches those boys and men played, in the camps,

in the hospitals and nursing homes which many of them were never to leave again. And not until every foot of German East African soil had been wrested from the Boche, not until his defeat out there was complete, did my letters from East Africa suddenly cease, and did the Great Silence—with its all too obvious inference—fall.

With all my heart I gave thanks for the fortune that had permitted me to write those Auction books. I repeated my thanks as I received request after request to send a presentation copy to some canteen or hospital—as I played games with convalescents whose thin hands had but recently laid down the bayonet and the gun. And in the meantime I had learned a lesson which I shall never forget—the lesson that life *must* have its recreations and its touches of lightness. The greater the stress, the greater the need of such! And an Auction book may fill as deep a need as may helmets and sweaters, bandages and kits!

So much for the vindication, and the dignity, of the game I love! Now as to that game itself!

There is nothing in Auction newer than the words in the following pages—that is, there is

nothing *true* that is newer. Present-day Auction gossip (like that famous Gossip of old) will tell you things that are new and things that are true; but the things that are new are not true, and the things that are true are not new—at least, not newer than the text of this book.

As ever, there have been cheap sensations, and there have been false prophets. Take that hideous monstrosity, "Pirate Auction"—so aptly named, in that it should wear a black mask to hide its face! That was the game which was to "sweep the world in six months," to supersede Auction and drive it into oblivion! It took but one evening's play to convince me of its spuriousness, and to set my face against it. I could conceive three possible additions that might lift it into at least the semblance of a game—but even then, it would have been a poor substitute for Auction proper. And as no one else seemed to think of even these three additions, "Pirate" remained a joke. My publishers and I could, of course, have made money by rushing to its temporary support; instead, we steadily refused to touch it, *because we knew!* Undoubtedly, its one-time supporters must have been sincere in their

admiration—they could hardly otherwise have made such a bid for public attention and public funds. But to grant their sincerity is to admit their woeful lack of vision. I can see two sides to most questions, but I simply cannot see how any real card-player ever believed in Pirate. To parody the old nursery rhyme, "WHERE IS THAT PIRATE Now?"

Other hectic reports reach my ears from time to time: "Is it true that each side is hereafter to be permitted one unpunishable revoke on every hand?" (imagine the lack of dignity and the impossibility of planning an intelligent campaign; imagine substituting chicanery for science!) "is it true that soon a player may score no more than his bid?" (not unless he prefers to play Five Hundred, rather than Bridge). And so on, indefinitely.

Dear Readers, have I ever led you very far astray? Didn't I beg you to beware of High Spades, and promise you that we would put them permanently out of business? Didn't I implore you to reserve long weak bids for a later round, rather than open them with two? Didn't I drill you in bid and raise and call-off—and didn't you find we were right? Didn't I assure you that Pirate was

a joke—and isn't it? True, I loved Nullos, and Nullos didn't come—but they should have! They were no mere bag of tricks to catch the public eye and the public pence. They were the most scientific, the most difficult, the fairest variant that Auction has ever known. And as science, skill, and fairness are my fetishes, I fought like a tiger for their child. But as I told you from the first, I couldn't do it alone. Many of you supported me nobly, but not enough. If a larger number of players had been experts, if card-politics hadn't intervened, if unintelligent gamblers hadn't hated to see luck killed and skill substituted, we should have been playing Nullos to-day and Auction would have had nearly as high a skill-percentage as Chess. Help me to preserve its present dignity, help me to keep its luck-percentage from veering toward that of Bacarat and Roulette!

Rest assured that if the game ever changes, I'll write an immediate book and tell you about it. In the meantime, take my word for this; anyone who knows all that this little volume holds can play with ANYONE, ANYWHERE. I'll vouch for that. I have made it my endeavour in these pages to

cover all legitimate ground, even that on which I personally—and from preference—never tread. If the ground is there, and if it is *real* ground, you'll find it described.

Florence Irwin

HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON.

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The Complete Auction Player

CHAPTER I

(Specially recommended to beginners)

THE ROUTINE OF THE GAME

Two packs of cards are necessary, though only one of them is used in each hand.

The four players cut for partners. Those cutting the lowest two cards play together. Those cutting the highest two cards are partners against them.

Ace is low in cutting, and the suit-values are reversed. In playing, spades are the highest suit; in cutting, they are the lowest. If two cards of the same denomination be cut, the spade would be the lowest, the heart next, the diamond next, and the club the highest.

The partners who cut low have the choice

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of cards and seats. The lowest card cut marks the first dealer.

Partners are always retained throughout a rubber. A rubber is two games won by the same partners. The games may be consecutive, or otherwise.

In a sitting of more than one rubber there are three ways of determining subsequent partners. These are:

1st. Playing the same.

2nd. Pivoting.

3rd. Cutting in.

"Playing the same" is retaining the same partners throughout an entire sitting.

"Pivoting" is changing partners after every rubber and according to fixed routine. The player who sits on the left of the last dealer of the just-completed game, is the first dealer for the new game. That player sits still. The others change so that all four players are re-paired in regular order; each player plays *with* each other player, and *against* each two other players, an equal number of times and in the same rotation. This form of pairing is in particular favour at card parties where prizes are given.

"Cutting in" is repeating, after each rubber, the original process for pairing.

Former partners may cut with, or against, each other. The deal may be lost, or retained, by that player who would be the next dealer in order. Choice of cards and seats is again given to the players cutting the low cards. This form of pairing is by far the "sportiest."

Every pack of cards, before being dealt, must be "made" (*i. e.*, shuffled) by the adversary on the left and cut by the adversary on the right.

"Cut to the right, deal to the left."

To "deal" is to take the pack of cards and give them out, one at a time, beginning with the card on the top of the pack and the player on the dealer's left. The last card should come to the dealer and each player should have thirteen cards. Every player should assure himself that he has his proper number before the business of the hand begins.

The cards should never be touched by any player other than the dealer, until the deal is completed.

The *dealer* of a hand is not necessarily its *player*.

The Deal

The deal in Auction goes around the table regularly, but the *play* of the hand may be