

THE WASHINGTON POST
11 March 1916

Here's the Man Who Invented "Pirate" Bridge.

**How Aleister Crowley, the Poet, Devised
the Method by Which Players May Demonstrate
Individual Skill and Judgment and Avoid Being
Tied Up With Tiresome Partners.**

And now it's pirate bridge.

Auction bridge has had to retire modestly into the background while society has adopted the new game with its thrills and fascinating combinations of opportunities for ability and luck.

Pirate bridge is the fad, and something more than a fad, for it's here to stay. Try it yourself and you'll say the same thing.

The strangest part of this card table revolution is that a poet is responsible for it all. Now and then society captures a poet, but this time the poet captured society. Also, he is a good poet, so far as his verses go, although his invention of pirate bridge may be cited against him in the final summing up of good and bad—and again it may be set down to his credit.

Aleister Crowley Responsible.

The poet is Mr. Aleister Crowley, an English writer, who is at present in this country. The idea of the game came to him while he was playing triple dummy to while away a rainy week in New Hampshire during the autumn of 1916. The central idea was that instead of cutting for partners and keeping them for an entire rubber, the partners might be changed every hand.

Going to New York, Mr. Crowley showed the game to friends, who at once recognized its possibilities. Several tried it, and the result was that the idea was quickly laid before the American authority on cards, Mr. R. F. Foster. Under his hands the game was rounded out, revised and cast into shape, penalties for irregularities provided and rules drawn up. This took three weeks. Then, in a series of informal talks, the game was brought to the attention of several of the leading card clubs of New York. No further introduction needed.

Some of the Advantages.

Of the advantages of pirate bridge Mr. Crowley himself has written epigrammatically.

"You can," he says, "if you are clever, avoid tying yourself up with a tedious, poetic, alcoholic or idiotic partner." This is the first of the seven advantages he cites. The others are "The hands which work best together—in any suit—tend to come together.

"Fewer final bids are set back, thus shortening the duration and tediousness of every rubber.

Each Plays for Himself.

"Every player is playing for himself. Four individual scores are kept, all independent.

"It does away with a lot of bickering and quarrelling. You may feel inclined to blame some one for 'accepting' you when the hand goes wrong, but you are not tied to him for a rubber.

"It is a first-rate game for the man who fancies his own individual play, and has many of the best elements of poker."

Mr. Crowley illustrates how his game works out. Writing in a recent number of *Vanity Fair*, he says:

How Pirate Works Out.

"Let me draw a picture. In auction, I bid a heart, but only with fear and trembling, because my partner may not have any hearts at all. In the new game of pirate I can bid two hearts and feel more or less certain that either the man—no matter where he sits—with the hearts or the man with the aces and kings is going to accept me as a partner and so save me from ignominy and ruin. After a bid has been accepted, and a partnership thus established, the next player can make a higher bid, when anybody can accept that bid and so establish a new partnership, and so on indefinitely.

"But, more delightful than anything else, is the change in the actual play introduced by the fact that partners are not always playing across the table. One's dummy may be exposed across the table, or at one's immediate right or left. Finessing and 'leading through' become much more interesting and important when two partners are sitting next to each other. The whole technique of the play of the cards at once becomes a great deal more diversified, unexpected and subtle."

How Partners Are Chosen.

Pirate bridge is played by four persons using two full packs. A table is complete with six persons, four being active.

Partners are chosen in this way. When a player bids—in his turn—each in turn to his left must either accept or pass. The player accepting signifies his willingness to accept and becomes the dummy, without changing his seat at the table. This done, the bid and acceptance can be overcalled, and the new bid must be accepted as was the first. If it is not, the last acceptance stands. The rules operate to prevent players from making rash or shut-out bids, as well as to prevent an opponent of a concluded partnership from shutting out a legitimate bid that might be made on his left if he passed.

Reopened by a Double.

Bidding is reopened by a double, but it cannot be “accepted,” as it is forced on the partner. The pro tem partner of the doubler can, if he can get an acceptor, bid himself out of it. If not, it comes back to the accepted bid, doubled. No bid can be raised, overcalled or doubled until it has been accepted.

The revoke penalty is a straight 50 points for each revoke, doubled or redoubled if the contract has been doubled or redoubled. The penalty falls on both the revoking partners. In general, however, the laws dealing with minor offences are founded upon those of auction bridge, except where consideration of the individual character of the play has made some changes imperative.

Dummy's hand is laid down the moment the first card is led, regardless of its position at the table, so that dummy may be left, right or opposite the dealer. The player to the left of the dealer leads for the first trick unless dummy is at the dealer's left. In such cases the player next to dummy leads.

Bidder Scores Below Line.

There are many points, great and small, wherein pirate bridge differs from auction, but these are best learned from the official rules, and in the game itself. They are quickly mastered, players assert. Indeed, before launching pirate bridge its authors “tried it out” carefully upon players of various grades. The result was convincing.

The bidder in pirate is the only one who scores below the

line. His partner—the acceptor—who is always dummy—scores the same points as the bidder, except in final rubber points. The acceptor's score is always above the line.

In pirate, weak hands have always a good opportunity to save themselves by the use of adroit bidding and, of course, skill in play.

Only One Wins Rubber.

As to the rubber, it can be won by only one of the players. Herein is the individual feature of the game brought out. No one can win a rubber that does not win games. Naturally, a player must strive to bid and find a partner, than to be the acceptor, and aid some one else in winning the rubber. At pirate, the striving to be the player and not the acceptor is a new feature in any card game, and to be the player of judgment opens up greater advantages than the same quality in poker.

Of course there are selfish acceptors who would always try to slip in with a strong hand for a partner, before the one whom the bid was intended to reach could get in his acceptance. This little detail has been well thought out and provided for.

Extra Trick the Remedy.

It was remedied by bidding and extra trick in the suit, and it was to protect the bidder that a rule was introduced whereby he may overcall his own accepted bid. A novice may win often with a moderate or even a poor hand, either by good judgment in accepting the right partner or, if you are the bidder, forcing the right player to be the acceptor.

Meantime, what of the guilty poet? Just as present he is enjoying the winter under Southern skies, learning more of the country which has inspired him to sing his praises. Mr. Crowley is an Englishman of Irish antecedents, but his point of view, at least, so far as his writings are concerned, is English rather than Celtic. Here is an exception.

Some of Crowley's Work.

It is a part of his "Appeal to the American Republic," written shortly after the Spanish war:

"Thou fair republic over sea afar, where long blue ripples lap
the fertile land,
Fixed by the iron hands and swords of war,

Now must for aye a constellation stand—
Thou new strong nation! As the eagle aspires
To match the sun's own fires,
Children of our land, hear the children of your sires.

"The eagle of your emblem would not stoop
To the proud vaunts of that outrageous wing
That Bismark reared and strengthened and bade swoop
Fierce upon France, whose pallid pinions droop
To own an emperor when she wished a king:
Their challenge you handed back across the foam:
Vienna and tall Rome
Trembled for their ally: you stirred our hearts at home.

"The fire of love no waters shall drown,
The faith of friendship stands the shocks of time;
Seal with your voice the triumph of this hour,
Your glory to our glory and our power
Alliance of one tongue, one faith, one clime!
Seal and clasp hands; and let the sea proclaim
Friendship of righteous fame,
And lordship of two worlds that time can never tame.

"What matters though our fathers did you wrong?
Though brave sons brake our bitter yoke?
Though we strove to compel you to do a cruel thing?
What, though the stronger did defeat the strong?
Both, wild and patient as the steep, strong sea?
What matter that some strive to waken hate,
Traitors to either state,
Hang them in chains! Our way to freedom cannot wait!

"Are not your veins made purple with our blood,
And our dominions, touch they not afield?
Pours not the sea its long exultant flood
On either's coast? The rose has one same bud,
And the vine's heart, one purple pledge doth yield.
Are we not weary of the fanged pen?
Are we not friends and men?
Let us look frankly face to face—and quarrel then!

"For by the groves of green and quiet ways,
And on the windy reaches of the river,
In moonlit night and blue unbroken days
And where the cold ice breaks in pallid bays,

And where dim dawns in frosty forest shiver.
Where India burns and far Australia glows;
Where cactus blooms, where rose,
Let our hearts' beat be heard, to lighten many woes.

Sister and daughter of our loyal isle,
Our hands reach out to you, our lips are fain
To wreath with yours in one delicious, in one delicious
smile
Of budding love, to give a kiss awhile,
And laugh like bride and groom, and kiss again!
Let our alliance like a marriage stand,
Supreme from strand to strand
The likeness of our love, the clasp of hand in hand.

"And men who come behind us yet unborn,
Nor dimly guessed at down the brook of time,
Shall celebrate the brave undying morn
When the free nations put aside their scorn
For friendship, rock no sundering surge may climb,
When their strong hands gripped hard across the sea
Flushed with fresh victory,
Lands royal, leal and great, vast, beautiful and free.

"Our children's children shall unsheathe the sword
Against the envy of some tyrant power:
The leader of our people and our lord
Shall join to wrest from slavery abhorred
Some other race, a fair, storm-ruined flower!
O fair republic, lover and sweet friend,
Your loyal hand extend,
Let freedom, peace and faith grow stronger to the end.

"O child of freedom, thou art very fair!
Thou hast white roses on thy eager breast,
The scent of all the South is in thy hair.
Thy lips are fragrant with the blossoms rare
Blown under sea waves when the white wings rest!
Come to our breast, where victory
Sits passionate and free—
Ring out the world salute! Our sister over sea!"

This is the matured work of a man whose poems already well and favorably known in England, are winning many admirers in this country.