

TAHITI, WHERE YOU "GET AWAY FROM IT ALL"

You Do, That Is, if You Act Quickly, for Nearly All the Good Hermit Sites Are Taken and the Demand Is Still Fresh to Brisk

By TORREY FORD

Illustration by ELLISON HOOVER

Tahiti Is Where People Go When They Get Tired of This World and Are Not Ready to Take a Chance on Either of the Next Two

THERE may be some argument as to who really put Tahiti on the map. Perhaps it doesn't matter. Whether it was Paul Gauguin or Pierre Loti or W. Somerset Maugham or the anonymous poet who dared to rhyme the place with "nightie," in the end it's all the same. Tahiti is on the map.

And yet, if you pushed the average man in the corner and made him tell all he knew about Tahiti at the point of a gun, he'd probably stumble into the simple explanation that it's the place where people go when they get tired of this world and aren't quite ready to take their chances on either of the next two worlds.

Except for a few persons who go in for geographical accuracies and the closer followers of Frederick O'Brien, Tahiti is just a place where being a hermit has been reduced to its simplest form. According to the accepted theory, being a recluse in Tahiti is easier than being a bean-eater in Boston. The mere atmosphere of the place permits no other schedule of existence.

Persons who want to get away from the telephone and the mailman, from railways and motor cars, from tax collectors and credit house attorneys, from the baseball scandal and the peace treaty wrangle, from the thousand and one trials and tribulations of modern civilization—those with the nerve and the temporary incentive pack a few dollars and clothes in a Gladstone bag and head for Tahiti.

Bank embezzlers line up to buy their tickets alongside of long-haired writers who have notions of perpetrating the great American novel. Poets and painters, disappointed politicians and broken-down crooks, wife deserters and alimony dodgers, all have had the good word passed along that Tahiti is the magic land where nothing matters.

Summed up briefly, residence in Tahiti has been regarded as a leave of absence from the world, with full privileges of returning after a decent interval has elapsed and taking up the thread of life again with the dismal past wiped completely off the slate. As an isle of last resort it was supposed to have no equal.

The great Gauguin started the rumor some thirty years ago. Back in '91 this modern artist, whose fame had hardly penetrated beyond the borders of France, became slightly fed up with the ways of his fellow men. There wasn't any one item that disturbed him most, but everything seemed all wrong. So he packed up his easel and a few brushes and made off without leaving any forwarding address with the home folks. A few who were in on the secret knew that he was directing himself toward the South Sea Islands, with intention of choosing the most isolated of the lot and settling down for life. That was the only clue to his whereabouts.

Just why Gauguin stepped off the ship at Tahiti no one has been able to figure accurately. It may have been the stirring reception of the natives, or the lack of it, or the fashion of the women's headdresses that caught his eye. Anyway, Gauguin dis-



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embarked hastily and disappeared inland. Two years later he came out of the wilderness, a healthy coat of tan on the back of his neck and a flock of finished canvases tucked under his arm. He was on his way back to civilization.

France and the world failed to assess the South Sea paintings at anything above face value. Gauguin thought they were great and said so. He implied that his work had been inspired by the climate and the Tahitian moan (whatever that was). The world sniffed and began talking about other things.

Gauguin repeated emphatically that Tahiti was a great place to paint and a splendid place in which to die. He went back and did both things; that is, he painted for some eight or nine years and then died without breaking into the headlines of the cable reports.

A few years after his death, which brings the story up to the approximate present, the art connoisseurs "discovered" Gauguin. Scattered about the continent in second-hand furniture stores and junk shops, paintings began to pop up bearing the now famous Gauguin signature. The dispute over which were and which weren't authentic Gauguins waxed furiously and the price of the genuine article soared tremendously.

Some one located a shack on Tahiti that had been all painted up by the eccentric artist. An attempt was made to move the thing

bodily to Paris. The connoisseurs considered there was too much art to it to be wasted on the Tahitians.

Then it was that people began remembering about Gauguin and Tahiti. One person recollected that it was to that remote island the artist had given credit for his inspiration. Another brought up the Tahitian moan. Softly about the world, artistic and otherwise, it was whispered: On to Tahiti!

Artists, poets, novelists, inventors, any one with a suppressed genius to develop, took up the trail and started toward the South Sea Islands. What Tahiti had done to one man it might do to another.

In case the world was forgetting, W. Somerset Maugham brought out *The Moon and Sixpence* two summers ago. He incorporated the theme of the weird artist and his Tahitian seance in the character of Charles Strickland. He made Strickland rather a disagreeable sort of person; but, far and wide, he spread the gospel of the Tahitian solitude and what it could do for a person.

Besides turning out something more than a best seller, Mr. Maugham gave fresh impetus to the grand rush on Tahiti. The faint whisper had grown to an echoing roar: ON TO TAHITI!

That's the situation to-day. All roads stretch out toward the Tahitian solitude. The Cook's Tour people book a passage as though,

after all, it weren't much of an adventure. New lines touch at Tahiti that never heard of the queer little island in ordinary times. Transportation companies boast openly in their booklets: "Through passage from Titus Falls, Iowa, to Tahiti, with only nineteen changes."

Passing on through the fad and fancy stage, Tahiti has become firmly entrenched in the hearts of the whole people. Its doings form a legitimate part of the news of the day. Its manners and customs are common knowledge; its climate passes as adequate drawing-room chatter; its politics make excellent cracker-box gossip. For an island only eight miles across the chest and a bare hundred miles to its winding seacoast frame, it has managed to gather more than its share of publicity.

As a net result of all this propaganda and loose talk we are offering up the opinion for any who care to consume that Tahiti is slightly overrated as an isle of last resort. A thumbnail sketch of the place as it appears to the modern traveler shows some appalling discrepancies to the legend as handed down in the history of Paul Gauguin.

Besides the few hundred natives and the French officials who make up the regular population, Tahiti is congested summer and winter with "hermits," both amateur and professional. You find them stacked four deep in the hotel rooms, swarming the provincial sidewalks and crawling the cows out of the pastures. A cot

bed in Tahiti—or so they say—has been held at a premium for the last eighteen months and parking area is almost beyond the means of the average man. To relieve matters, the local authorities have even considered gathering in a few of the adjacent islands and renaming them East Tahiti, Upper Tahiti, and so forth.

The natives, prolific as they are in their own tongue, fail to understand quite all that is going on, yet they are making the most of the orgy and reaping the proverbial harvest. While the hermit business lasts they are missing none of the tricks.

As the tourist trundles down the gangplank, armed with a passport and a letter of credit, he is shoved along by the custom officers directly into the midst of a young army of real estate boosters. Inside of the first twenty minutes he has more deserted shacks offered to him than he could inhabit in a lifetime of foreign pilgrimages. The shack may mean anything from a recent cowshed with bathing facilities to a fourteen-room bungalow with eight baths and a tennis court, and the wilderness, mentioned early in the prospectus, may be a dinky back yard with a heavy undergrowth of saw-palmetto.

If the tourist is at all acquainted with the real estate game he will pass up the boosters until he has acclimated himself to the conventions of the place. Before getting into the thing too deep it is well to discover on which

side of the town the more elite "hermits" store their spare trunks. Otherwise, a well-to-do bond thief might find himself in with a lot of low-brow poets who burn incense and drink tea in the forenoon. Still it is rather difficult to think of everything in the first half hour on shore.

Next in the path of the alien invader come the rows of hotel busses and stray hacks. To the man who is trying to "get away from the world" this may be a disappointing spectacle. It may savor too much of Asbury Park, N. J., or Saratoga Springs, N. Y. But when he discovers that in remote Tahiti he can pick from a long list of hostels starting with an A No. 1 palatial hotel, golf course included on the premises, and sloping down to a third rate pension with eggs extra for breakfast, he may decide that his notions of a hermit's life are old-fashioned and that it's all right to be comfortable as long as the folks back home don't know.

And after he has selected his particular bellhop and is joggling over the cobbles up through the town he has another series of surprises. He notices that there are movie houses to entertain the "hermits," department stores closing out bargains in full "hermit" equipment and sightseeing bus lines taking in all the points of interest on the island, including the Paul Gauguin shack and the Pierre Loti monument.

He sees that they go in for sectional hermit associations in Tahiti. A big banner floating from a second story window urges: "Ohio Hermits! Register here." He also is informed that the South Atlantic States Hermits, Chapter 49, are staging a clamor on the following Tuesday p. m.

Later he wanders into a big open air park, providing recreation grounds for several thousand. A band plays in the center morning, afternoon and evening. Quoits, roque, dominoes and chess are all indulged in freely. For entertaining its visiting strangers St. Petersburg, Fla., isn't it with Tahiti.

Just where the wild life and the Tahitian moan enter into the proceedings it is difficult for him to imagine. And the Tahitian solitude is somehow missing.

The second morning at breakfast he bumps into his wife's cousin from Topeka, a dyspeptic individual who carries around bran muffins in his coat pocket. If he mingles at all, he is sure to run into other unpleasant reminders of his former misfortunes; the man who gave him the bad tip on July cotton last summer, a neighbor from down the street whose lawn mower he broke and never returned, a ward politician whose fingers he had never greased, a boss who had fired him once.

After the first few days he becomes accustomed to these petty annoyances and settles down to take things as he finds them. He doesn't write home and tell about his disappointments either, and by the time he gets back he has forgotten most of them and enlarges on the thrill of leading the hermit life.

But actually, you see, being a recluse in Tahiti isn't so darn easy. If you are really serious about getting away from the world, try Hoboken or the upper Bronx. It's safer in the long run.

AUCTION BRIDGE-PLAYERS' SCHOOL

By R. F. FOSTER

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ness of the ten held. The remaining high club, king or jack, was led and covered and trumped, establishing the eight for Z.

When dummy led the diamonds, B put the ace right up and led the fourth club, which Z won with the eight, dummy discarding a diamond. A small spade allowed dummy to finesse the ten, which is quite safe, as game seems sure. A diamond was returned and trumped. Another spade and the jack forced the ace. Another diamond is trumped, and the losing spade puts A in, so that Z makes both ace and queen of trumps, five by cards and game.

At one of the tables that did not double with A's cards the opening lead was a small spade, which Z won with the nine. The diamond was led, A putting on the king. Then, seeing that he could not hope for two club tricks while dummy could ruff, he laid down the ace of clubs, and followed with the ten of diamonds, which Z trumped.

The jack of clubs was covered by the queen and trumped. Then dummy led jack

and another trump, Z dropping the king on the third round, and making his two clubs. The only other trick for A and B was the spade king, so that Z won four by cards and the game against the spade opening.

At the table at which the trump was the original opening there was no doubling, the contract remaining at one heart. Dummy put on the jack second hand, and B covered with the king, which he saw was lost in any case and he does not want diamonds led through him by dummy.

Z now maps out the hand for a cross ruff, but in order to get a club from the weak hand he put dummy in with the spade ace. The finesse of the club ten went to A's queen, and A led another trump, which Z won with the seven. The king of clubs forced the ace, and Y trumped.

The diamond went to B's ace, and he led the eight of spades, the nine and jack falling. A led the king of diamonds and Z trumped. Z picked up B's trump and led the top club, but failed to drop the nine, losing a spade and a club at the end, making only two odd, instead of four or five by cards.

Here is the solution of Problem No. 68, given last week, in which hearts were trump, Z to lead and Y-Z to win seven tricks.

Z starts with the diamond. If A covers, the solution is simple, but if A passes the jack holds and Z follows with a small club. Y wins this and leads the king of diamonds. B can trump or discard the king of clubs. If he sheds the club, Z gets rid of the spade queen and Y leads a spade. This Z trumps and leads a club, which Y trumps with the

ten, leaving the diamond for Z to trump with the ace, losing a trump at the end.

If B trumps the king of diamonds, Z overtrumps with the jack, and leads the ace and six of clubs, which allows Y to win the third round, catching A's queen, while Z discards the spade queen. Now Y makes the nine of diamonds, and loses the last trick to the ace of spades.

Questions and Answers

AUCTION BRIDGE

Question—At no score dealer bids a diamond, second hand a spade. Third and fourth hands both pass. Dealer goes to two diamonds. Should second hand call two spades, holding these cards: Six spades to the king, queen, nine; three hearts to the king, jack, jack and one diamond and two small clubs?—J. B. S.

Answer—The hand is not strong enough to rebid, and it is better to wait for the partner to say something. Unless he can help the spades, game is hopeless. On the other hand, the dealer, whose partner has already refused help for the diamonds, cannot win the game unless he is strong enough to bid game.

Question—The declaration is in spades. A leads a heart, and after dummy and third hand both follow suit the dealer trumps it, turning down the trick. Before leading to the next trick the dealer discovers that he had a heart. Is it too late to correct the error or not?—W. B. C.

Answer—Turning down the trick is not enough to complete the revoke, but if the dealer has quit any contact with it after it is turned down the revoke is established. Re-

moving the fingers from it is quitting under the rules.

PINOCHLE

Question—In playing two-hand, can a player make a meld with the last card he takes up from the stock, his opponent not yet having taken up the last of all?—B. F. G.

Answer—No. It is to prevent such a meld that a player who is afraid of some big score, such as 100 aces or 150 trumps, will lead out at the end several cards that are either sure to win the trick or break up the feared meld. Question—In melding, A objects to the high bidder's making his meld first and lying out for the widow afterward. What difference does it make, as he has only the eighteen cards to select from at any time?—C. C. L.

Answer—The bidder is not allowed to lay away any part of his meld; therefore he is

Bridge Problem No. 69

♠ K2
♥ 94
♦ A65
♣ A

♠ Q
♥ J10
♦ K973
♣ A

♠ Y
♥ A4
♦ A85
♣ J2

♠ 53
♥ KQ6
♦ Q8
♣ A

Hearts are trumps and Z leads. Y and Z want four tricks. How do they get them? Solution next week.

obliged to discard before he shows the meld cards. One of the fine points of the game is in remembering what cards the bidder shows for a meld and inferring what the others are from the course of the play.

POKER

Question—A opens a jack pot. B, C and D all stay and draw cards. When the opener bets B sees him, but C raises the limit, upon which all drop out. As he takes in the pot C shows his hand to D, whereupon A demands that he also shall see it on the ground that he has as much right as D.—H. M. C.

Answer—No one at the table has any right to see the winning hand, as it was not called and C was not the opener. If C chose to show it to D that was between those two. If A was so anxious to know what C had he should have called him.

Question—A opens and B draws against him. When A bets B calls and A shows a pair of queens, whereupon B says: "I can beat that" and shows a pair of kings, tossing the rest of his hand into the deadwood and starting to take in the pot. A says: "Hold on; I have another small pair," which he shows. B says he also had a small pair and proceeds to dig them out of the discard. Can he do this after abandoning his hand?—L. W.

Answer—No. The rules demand a show of all five cards. If B threw up his hand or any part of it before seeing five he loses.

CINCH

Question—In this game, who counts low?—L. D.

Answer—Usually the rule is to count it to the player who wins it in tricks. This saves all disputes, as the deuce is not always in play, and no one remembers what was low.

ROULETTE

Question—Is there any book that gives a record of the run of numbers as they have come up at Monte Carlo?—S. G. M.

Answer—There is a book indexed in the Congressional Library: *Roulette at Monte Carlo*, by Frederick Lake, N. Y., 1901, which gives 5,356 numbers, classified and arranged

♠ J52
♥ 7
♦ J97532
♣ A103

♠ 93
♥ AQ64
♦ K104
♣ KJ72

♠ K64
♥ 9532
♦ AQ6
♣ 854

♠ AQ1087
♥ KJ108
♦ 8
♣ Q96

AMONG the defensive openings that are useful in avoiding undesirable suits is one that is very little used. During the many years that I have played at one of the leading bridge clubs in New York I do not recall a single instance in which it was resorted to by an average player, and only once or twice by players of any class.

This is the original lead of a trump right up to the declarer. What is the objection to it? That it is leading up to strength. That it will probably kill an honor in your partner's hand. That he might have used one of his trumps if you had not led them. I have heard all this time and again; but the fact remains that it is a very useful defensive opening, if your partner understands it.

It shows conclusively that not only one, but all the plain suits are bad ones to lead, as they are headed by high cards that are not in sequence. This leads to the natural inference that the partner, if he gets in, can lead up to any of those plain suits with confidence that it will be protected.

As to killing an honor in the partner's hand, he does not have to play the honor. The lead of a trump is not made to win tricks, but to force some one else to lead the plain suits, which they must do eventually. Nine times out of ten the honor in the partner's hand would have been caught in any case. If he thinks the declarer cannot catch it, why play it? The fact that his partner has played before dummy does not oblige him to throw a way a high trump.

Here is a deal played in a duplicate game last winter in which I found I was the only player that led the trump originally. Some opened one black suit, some the other. (See cut at the bottom of second column.)

Z dealt and bid a heart. A doubled, Y passed and B called the clubs, Z or Y going to two hearts, which held. At the tables at which A led the small club this is what happened:

Z won the trick with the ten, returning the king or jack, which A covered and Y trumped. Dummy then led a small trump, and the