

SECOND HAND AT AUCTION

ONE DUTY IS TO LEARN WHEN NOT TO BID.

Templation of the Straight Bridge Player to Show His Strength at Once.

There is probably no position at the card table which will expose the strength or weakness of a player's game as that of second hand in the bidding at auction bridge.

The bridge player, not yet free from the old idea of going straight to the declaration that fits his hand, pays little or no attention to his position at the table. He waits for his turn to speak and he will call a red suit or a black one or a no trumper second hand just as promptly as he would if he had dealt the cards or were the last man to say. The only hesitation is seen when the dealer's original call shuts out the bid that he had on the tip of his tongue.

The average player taking up auction for the first time seems unable to grasp the fact that when the dealer makes it easy for the second hand to speak the dealer himself will be the person most likely to benefit by the declaration, but that when the dealer makes any possible second hand declaration difficult or impossible it is the second hand that will have to pay the fiddle if he sets the tune. The moment we come to consider the tactics of the second player in auction bridge we find it necessary to distinguish between a free and a forced declaration. The dealer is forced to say something and his position is frankly recognized as a disadvantage. The second player is free to declare or to pass, but the majority of auction players overlook the importance of that fact and seem impelled to make a bid of some kind "to show my partner."

By thus forcing themselves to make a bid they place themselves under the same or even greater disadvantage. The first thing then for the second hand to learn and to lay well to heart is that any declaration he makes is a free declaration and that it should have some great advantage in its favor to justify it. The dealer, being compelled to risk something, is very much like the age in poker, who must put up a blind without any exercise of judgment on his part and with no clue as to the possibilities of the hands opposed to him. Each of the following players is at liberty to save his money or to risk it, and just as much of his science of poker is in knowing when to go in as when to stay out. So in auction bridge, the science lies in knowing when to bid and when to keep quiet.

As Browning very aptly remarks, "the auction element introduces to bridge opportunities for the display of the particular qualities and skill required in the game of poker," and it is this that makes it a totally different game from bridge. In bridge the chief interest lies in the play and the inferences are drawn from the fall of the cards. In auction the whole thing is in the bidding and the principal interest lies in accurate and intelligent reasoning from the preliminary bids, which serve as a guide to the final or winning declaration. Eliminate this peculiar "feeling the way" round of bids and the game is robbed of all the advantages of intelligent combination and reduced to a mere showdown of the best of the four hands dealt.

The bridge player's idea of auction seems to be pretty much the same as the "showdown" player's idea of poker. Instead of basing his own bid upon careful inferences from the declarations of others he puts up the limit right from the jump and banks everything upon having the best hand. When every one jumps in and makes the first bid as if it were the last the bidding is usually over almost immediately; in fact it is very common for the first bid to be the only one and some players take it to be a great hardship to be forced to bid two tricks in a suit after they have announced their preference by declaring one. Occasionally of course the bidding will go round more than once, but one is sometimes tempted to ask what it all means. Every second bid seems to be dragged from the players against their will.

As an illustration of how a party of bridge players bid up a hand at auction take the following distribution of the cards, which the writer saw in one of our best clubs last week:

Hand distribution table with columns A, Y, B, Z and suits Spades, Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs.

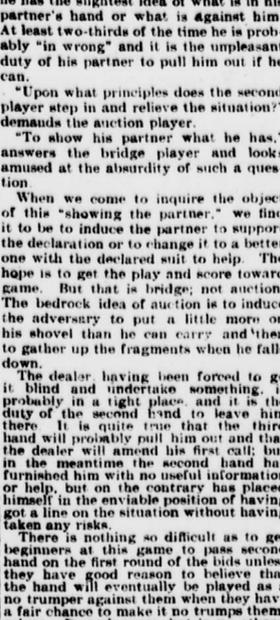
Z dealt and started with one club. A, recognizing this as an invitation to bid, was anxious to show B what to lead in case Y did go no trumps, so he bid one diamond. B, having no stopper in diamonds and not liking the relation of the looks of the diamond pretty well and Z could not say anything without a hint from Y, so A was anxious to bid one club. This his partner's declared ace for the first trick.

The result was that A and B were set for one trick. Had A kept quiet would almost certainly have gone no trumps. B would have set him for one trick and, at least, perhaps two. Time and again we see the second hand in his anxiety to "show his partner something" make a free bid which is not only unnecessary, but dangerous, and the only reason that he escapes as often as he does is because the third hand is not sufficiently keen to see the situation in the hands played at the first duplicate auction bridge tournament at the Lotus Club. It cost the second hand 400 points to show his partner that he held six back of it but four to a queen, the dealer having started matters with a bid of one no trumper. The hand had a consequent doubled, instead of supporting his partner with two no trumps and the second hand was left to play it, his partner being helpless to help him out.

The best thing, apparently, for the second hand, is to pass anything and everything, unless he wants to shut the dealer's side out of the bidding. A good working rule would be for the second hand never to bid anything on the first round unless he can go no trumps.

PIECES OF CHELSEA PORCELAIN THAT BROUGHT A RECORD PRICE.

Pair of Groups Sold Recently in London—\$4,987.50 the Sum Paid for Them, a Figure Not Previously Approached by Ware of this Kind.



Here are pictures of a pair of groups of Chelsea porcelain, which were sold in London and which brought a record price. The catalogue description of the pieces was as follows: "A Pair of Chelsea Groups, each with figures of a lady and gentleman carrying flowers and fruit, emblematic of seasons, and standing on white and gold scroll plinths richly ornamented with colored flowers, foliage, and corn modelled by Roubilliac, stamped R-12, in high."

ELECTRICITY ON THE FARM

SMALL STREAMS MADE TO RUN LABOR SAVING MACHINERY.

Two Examples of What May Be Done Nowadays in the Way of Lightening Farm Work—Electric Lights in Barns and Conveniences in the Dwelling.

ORISKANY FALLS, N. Y., March 11.—The development of the water power that is now running to waste on the farms of this country is the greatest advancement that will come to the American farmer within the next few years, said an electrical engineer recently.

He had been investigating the possibilities of such development and had seen that some of the more progressive farmers had already done in the way of harnessing small streams and thereby providing electricity for power, heat and illumination. Labor saving machinery has revolutionized almost every industry in the last few years, but the farmer has been unable to take advantage of many inventions meant to help him because of the absence of power to run them. The possibilities, however, were there, and now existing conditions make it necessary to utilize them.

The supply of farm labor at a reasonable cost is becoming smaller every year. The strong young men are all rushing to the cities. That being the case the farmer is obliged to look to power driven machinery to help him out. The most promising source of power for farmers in the Eastern States is found in streams. An electric power plant driven by water requires comparatively little personal attention while in operation, and needs no replenishing of fuel except such as nature herself provides in the flowing stream. Not only are there many of these sources of power that are undeveloped, but there are many others which were abandoned in years gone by and were then allowed to fall into disuse for various reasons.

Many old sawmills were abandoned when the surrounding hills were denuded of their forests. A small investment would enable all such old power sites to be utilized for the generating of electricity. Such a water power plant is frequently made to serve the owner or the group of owners with electric current at a very small first cost for each individual and at an operating cost which should be very low.

Two of the most notable electrical farm plants in this State are the E. B. Miner farm near Oriskany Falls, Oneida county, and Heart's Delight farm at Chazy, Clinton county. What they and many others have done thousands of farmers who have small streams on their farms can do.

By electric power generated on his farm Mr. Miner runs a large saw for cutting up all lengths and sizes of stovewood, runs the milking machines, ensilage cutters and hoisters, separators and ice cream freezers, churn, thrasher, grinder, pump, washing machines and wringer, besides lighting every room in his house and heating most of them by the same method.

He has electric lights in every barn and every other building on his farm where lights may be needed, including a well appointed machine shop, where he, with his sons, does all his own mechanical work. In that shop he has an electric motor that runs a lathe, drill, wire winding machine, soldering iron, buffing machine, buzz saw, and a large pump that operates the milking machines in the stables. In his house he has electric heaters in the different rooms that give the exact heat desired by the occupants. He also heats the stables by electricity and even has a normal flow of about 1,000 cubic feet a minute, with about a six foot fall, a 38 foot flow dam was put in, with a concrete and plank foundation. The dam is built to withstand almost any pressure that might come from floods and spring freshets, and to make it safe beyond all doubt they built a one foot high in the dam six feet wide and one foot high, that can be drawn out, one or all, as the supply of water demands. Further they have two large flood gates in concrete at the bottom of the dam that can be opened, and should the flood be so great that all these

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WORKS OLD AND NEW ON LYRIC STAGES IN EUROPE.

Russian Ballet Instead of Wagner at Covent Garden—Operatic Taste in Germany—The Wagnerian Bubble in South America—The Season in Italy.

Strauss's "The Knight of the Rose" has already been heard in Munich and Nuremberg and will soon be given in Vienna. From every city there comes a protest against the inordinate length of the work, which has not so far been curtailed to any great extent. Felix Mottl conducted the performance in Munich.

Maudie Fay, the American lyric soprano in the company of the Metropolitan Opera House at New York, is to be given at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels this spring.

"Eugen Onegin" has been revived at the Imperial Opera House in Vienna with the usual result. There seems little vitality in the Tchaikowsky operas, although in the lack of new works they are attempted from time to time. Berlioz's "Benvenuto Cellini" was the last production made by Felix Weingartner, the retiring conductor. He goes to the Municipal Opera House at Hamburg. He was received by the public on his last appearance at the conductor's desk with signs of mixed emotion.

"Madama Butterfly" was sung last year in Germany 473 times, which won for it the right to be called the most popular work of the year. "Carmen," which had held this title, came second. "Tiefland," which has made so little impression elsewhere that it should at least be liked in its own country, stood in the third place, although it has had as many as 47 performances in a year. D'Albert's "Iseyl" has been sung forty-five times, although his other works now play but an unimportant part in the operatic repertoire of Germany.

The opera of Wagner had in all 1,953 performances last season, with "Tannhauser" the most popular. "Salome" and "Elektra" now stand well toward the bottom of the list. "Pelléas et Mélisande" had only four representations as against thirty-four in the preceding season. "Faust" had only 105, while even "Mignon" was sung 310 times, which seems all but incomprehensible in this country. "Faust" was first sung in Germany fifty years ago at Darmstadt and was much more of a success than the first Paris hearing, at which the public enjoyed only the soldiers' march. The composer is present at the first German performance. "Humperdinck's" "Königskinder," which was sung in Wiesbaden after its Berlin performance, had Heinrich Hensel, this year's Parsifal at Bayreuth, as the kingly hero. The composer is said to be at work on an opera which has Fra Angelico as its protagonist, while Giacomo Puccini is said to be contemplating a text with its action passing in the time of Rembrandt in the Netherlands.

Vernon Stiles, the American tenor who sang for a season at Vienna in the Imperial Opera House, is now a member of the company at the Grand Théâtre de la Monnaie. He made his first appearance there as "Jean de Leyde" in "The Prophet." Edward Lankov, the American basso, has just made his first appearance at the Grand Théâtre de la Monnaie as "Sargastro" in "Il Flauto Magico." Paul Schmedes was to sing in Denmark, but the contract was cancelled when it was announced that he was to sing in Germany as "Die Dame" and it was felt that if he sang in German there might be a disturbance. It is difficult to conceive of any considerable disturbance following the feeble vocal efforts of Paul Schmedes in whatever tongue he sang.

Frieda Hempel, who is not after all to come to the United States next winter, sang the mezzo of Astrakhan in the Grand Théâtre de la Monnaie. Her performance of "The Prophet" was justly praised. Ernest Van Dyck is to return to Bayreuth this season and sing Parsifal, which he created at the outset of his career. Irma Brancaccio, a contralto and sister of Aino Ackté, who has belonged for some time to the Royal Opera House in Dresden, has been singing Carmen with great success through the German cities.

The present operatic season in Italy has been worse than any other in recent years. "Linda di Chamounix" was recently sung at the Pergola in Florence by Matteo Battistini and a cast of competent singers, who brought some success to Donizetti's old opera. It was not long afterward, however, that the singers refused to appear because their salaries were not paid. The season ended prematurely.

At Naples the San Carlo opened with "La Walkiria," which was so badly done that it was found necessary to change the character of the performances entirely in order to prevent premature closing of the season. Victor Cul, a young conductor, is the only member of the organization who has not been seriously criticized.

The Fenice in Venice ceased its efforts early in the year. The Teatro Adriano in Rome, which set out to give a season of opera, closed its doors soon without having gained either praise or profit for its efforts. Yet the impressions are not discouraged. Only a short time ago the Teatro Popolo, intended for workingmen and their families, opened its first season. It gives old operas at very cheap prices.

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The first of the three Italian seasons of opera to be given in Rome in connection with the exposition will begin the first week in May. It will be given by Matteo Battistini in the title rôle of "Macbeth," by Verdi, in which Giannina Russ and Signor Battistini will appear. It may be stated that the appointment of school physicians is to-day almost universal in Germany, and that in consequence of the work of these men as well as of school nurses new ideas have been introduced, so that the foregoing report in some of its statements already antiquated.

His Business Improving. From the Atlantic Continent. "Yes," said the old lady, "now that spring is with us business will pick up with the old man."

Asked what he did for a living she replied, "I sell rabbit feet for watch charms and I save off hoodlums; an' he does fine with rattlesnake tails; he makes money with the young mookin' birds an' pratin' for rain."

Curious Practice of a Himalayan People. From the Eastern World. Robert Bulwch, who has travelled extensively in the lesser known regions of the Himalayas, gives an interesting account of a native sect known as the Tharys who have some curious practices. The sect are worshippers of the goddess Kall. They believe in the safety of the workingman. One of their practices is to append the ends of their fingers to appease the deity. Thus it comes about that when the eldest member of a family is married the unhappy mother is expected to cut off the first two joints of the last two fingers of her hand. Princesses and other smart people in this remarkable sect are allowed to offer a substitute of finger joints, modelled in gold.

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