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THE GAME OF WHIST.[1]

I. The great feature of modern whist is the more perfect cultivation than formerly of the relations existing between the two players who are in partnership with each other. As these players have a community of interests, it is evidently desirable that they should act in conjunction. If the two hands could be put together and played as one, great advantage would clearly result; for not only would the strong points of each still preserve their full value, but special benefits would arise from the combination; just as the junction and co-operation of two divisions of an army would give more powerful results than could be obtained by their divided action. The modern play aims at carrying out this principle to the farthest extent possible. It forbids the player to consider his own hand apart from that of his partner, commanding him to treat both in strict union, and to make every step conducive to the joint interests of the pair. Simple and obvious as this principle appears, it is only very lately, after a century and a quarter of tentative approximations, that it has become fully recognized. The fact of the community of interests was, of course, always patent, but many of the earlier rules were either antagonistic to, or at least imperfectly fitted for, efficient combined play; and the tendency of the latest improvements has been either to abolish or modify these, so as to make the combination of the hands the ruling principle, the great basis from which the whole play springs. Now, in order that this combination may be properly effected, it is requisite that each partner should adopt the same general system of treating his hand; for there are several different modes of trick-making, according to either of which a player may regulate the general design of his play. These are fully investigated by Dr. Pole, and the discussion forms one of the best parts of his essay. He shows clearly that the only system which adapts itself favorably to the combination of the hands, is that of endeavoring to make tricks, by "establishing" and "bringing in" a *long suit*. Suppose, for example, you hold 6 spades; after a few leads of the suit you will probably be left with the full command of it, and every card, however small, will then make a trick, if led, and not trumped by the adversary. So essential is the adoption of this system to the interests of the combined hands, that Dr. Pole incorporates it in what he terms the fundamental theory of the modern

scientific game, which is—"That the hands of the two partners shall not be played singly and independently, but shall be combined and treated as one. And that in order to carry out most effectively this principle of combination, each partner shall adopt the long-suit system as the general basis of his play."

It is easy to trace how all the more important rules of modern play arise out of this theory. Take, for instance, the *management of trumps*, which is a great stumbling-block to ill-educated players. It is obvious that the chief obstacles to making long suits is their being ruffed, and that the advantage will be with that party who, having predominant numerical strength in trumps, can succeed in drawing those of the adversaries. Five trumps are generally sufficient for this purpose; and hence the rule, that if you hold this number, or more, you should lead them. Three or four leads will generally disarm both opponents, and you will still have one or more left to bring in your own or your partner's long suit, and stop those of the enemy. So important is the trump-lead under these circumstances, that, in the modern game, a conventional signal, or *call for trumps*, has been introduced, by which, if the holder of a strong trump-hand cannot get the lead early, he may intimate his strength to his partner, and so call on him to lead them as soon as he can. We shall have occasion to speak of this more fully hereafter. The old-fashioned objection to "lead to an honor," as well as the direction to "lead through an honor," both vanish under the modern system. Either is right, if you are strong in trumps; neither, if otherwise. It is imperative that your trump-lead be returned by your partner the first opportunity. Hesitation in this is inexcusable, as endangering the great benefit your strength would confer on the combined hands. If you hold only 4 trumps, much discretion is required as to leading them; and with 3 or less, which is numerical weakness, a trump-lead at the beginning of the hand is seldom justifiable. The proper application of trumps, when weak, is to use them for ruffing, if they escape being drawn by the adversary.

Several minor rules in regard to trumps are deducible from the same principles. The greatest mischief you can do to a strong trump-hand is to force it to ruff, thus depriving it of its preponderating strength. Hence you must carefully avoid forcing your partner, if you know him to be strong, or if, being weak yourself, you have reason to suspect he may be so. But, on the other hand, force a strong adverse trump-hand whenever you can. Again, if you are 2d player to a trick which it is possible your partner may win, and have none of the suit yourself (a position always puzzling to ill-taught players), the principles tell you to ruff fearlessly, if weak in trumps, but to pass the

trick, if strong. In the former case your trumps are useless; in the latter they are too valuable to risk losing unnecessarily.

In the *management of plain suits*, the theory furnishes ample guidance. It bears materially on the *first lead*, which, though the most important step a player has to take, has generally to be taken in the dark. This lead must therefore be guided by careful considerations, and it should have two objects in view; in the first place it should be a lead which, even in ignorance of the partner's cards, may be reasonably expected to benefit the combined hands, and not to favor the adversaries; and, secondly, it should serve to give the most direct and useful information to the partner as to the cards held by the leader. The lead from the long suits fulfills all these conditions: for even though the player may not succeed in ultimately bringing the suit in, the lead will be the safest he can make, and it will permit his realizing any other possible advantages from the cards in his hand.

The question, which card of your long suit you should first lead, is answered by considerations founded on careful reasoning and long experience. As a general principle, it is expedient to begin with the lowest, which gives your partner the chance of making the first trick, and enables you to keep the complete command at a later period. But when you hold several high cards, this principle is subject to modification by the chance of the suit being trumped, and by some other contingencies, and therefore certain definite leads have been determined for particular combinations, of which the following are the most useful:—First leads from a long plain suit.

Holding		*Lead*
Ace and king		King.
King and queen,		King.
Ace, queen, knave,		Ace, then queen.
Queen, knave, ten,		Queen.
King, knave, ten,		Ten.

The lead of king from king and ace, is one of the conventional refinements of modern play, for the purpose of conveying information to your partner. Leads in trumps, or in plain suits when trumps are out, are determined by special rules, which will be found in the books. The modern theory further defines the duty of your partner in helping you in regard to your long suit. After showing you his own, it is his duty to return yours; but much depends on what card he plays. In the first place, he must *get rid of the command* by playing out the master cards, if he holds them; for it is essential that you retain the superiority in your own hand. Then, secondly, he must adopt what is called *strengthening* play, by sacrificing his high cards in the suit to strengthen you. Suppose, for example, he had originally, ace, knave, and four, and has won your first lead with the ace, he must return the knave, and not the four. The effect of this is to raise the rank of any

lower cards you hold in the suit, and to aid in getting higher ones out of the way, so as to hasten your obtaining the complete command.

The modern system is chiefly useful in directing the *lead*, which is the active and aggressive part a player has to perform; but it is not without influence also on the more passive operations of the other hands, inasmuch as it prescribes greater care and strictness in what were thought, under the old system, unimportant things. The 2d player, for example, in the old game, would often feel at liberty to put on a high card to a small one led; but by the new doctrine he is bound, except in well-defined and recognized cases, to play his lowest, or he may give his lynx-eyed partner false information, and so ruin their joint plans. The 3d hand now is forbidden to do what he might often legitimately have done before, namely, to finesse (except with ace and queen) to his partner's original lead, as the high cards are wanted out of the way. Even the 4th player, easy as his part is, may do vast mischief if he is careless, with his sequences or small cards. Another application of the theory is in *discarding*, which should, if possible, be done from short or weak suits, not from long ones. The cards of the former are of little use; those of the latter may be very valuable, even to the smallest you have.

We have made several allusions to the communication of information between the partners, as to the contents of each other's hands. It is clear that if the hands are to be combined and played as one, such information must be ample and perfect, and the provisions for this are peculiarly characteristic of the modern game. It is prescribed that the whole play shall be so regulated as to convey the greatest possible amount of intelligence, and thus to aid, to the utmost, in the combined treatment of the hands. Indeed to such an extent is this carried, that the two players may be said to carry on throughout, a defined and legalized system of communication in their play, by which they obtain almost as perfect an insight into each other's hands as if their cards were exposed. The rules of this "conversation," as Cavendish calls it, are imperative, and a player who violates them, without sufficient reason, is said to play "false," or not to understand the "language" of the game. We must speak somewhat fully about these communications, because, at present, opinions are divided as to the extent to which they may legitimately be carried.

A large amount of information is conveyed, to an intelligent and observant partner, by simply following the rules which have been determined as most expedient on general grounds; and this is a great incidental advantage of a careful adherence to system. But the modern game goes much farther than this, inasmuch as it prescribes certain *conventional* modes of play, established by prearranged understanding,

for the sole purpose of conveying information. Cases are continually arising in which it is quite immaterial, as a matter of general expediency, what card is played; but in these you are allowed no choice; the convention directs what you are to do, and you are bound to follow it. A few examples will make this clear. Suppose king and ace are led in succession, and you hold only the two and the four; it is quite indifferent on general grounds, in what order you play them; but, the convention tells you, you must, when playing worthless cards, always throw away the lowest first, then the next lowest, and so on; it would be deemed a crime if (except for a definite motive to be explained presently) you were to drop the four first, as your partner would at once infer you had nothing smaller. Again, suppose you, being third player, hold a sequence of king, queen, and knave; they are all of equal value, but it is by no means indifferent which you play; the convention prescribes you must (if not leading, when other considerations come in) always play the *lowest* of a sequence; if you were to play the queen, your partner would infer you had not the knave. Another important convention is in returning your partner's suit, when you hold nothing but useless cards; you must return the highest if you have only two left, the lowest, if more; thus if, after winning his lead, you have the four and five left, you must return the five; if you have the four, five, and six, you must return the four. These, and some other conventional modes of play[3] have been admitted without question; but about 30 years ago an application of the principle was introduced which, although it has been very generally adopted in England, has given rise to much discussion. This is the *call for trumps*, already mentioned, which is given by throwing away, unnecessarily, a higher card before a lower, *i. e.* by a conventional departure from the ordinary conventional rule. Thus, in the case above mentioned, where king and ace are led, the call for trumps would be given by throwing away first the four, and then the two.

The legitimacy of this signal has been questioned. It is said, by some, to be no more justifiable than giving a sign with your finger, or kicking your partner under the table; but we cannot see that it is a whit more open to cavil than playing the lowest of a sequence, or any other præconcerted means of conveying information. It has been attempted to draw a distinction between purely empirical conventions, and such as may be traced to an extension of ordinary rules of play. For example, throwing away the smallest of two cards, both useless, is said to be only an extension of the same practice, when the higher one may be useful; playing the lowest of a sequence is deemed analogous to the common-sense rule of winning with the lowest card possible, and so on. It is then argued that this class may be allowed,

while empirical conventions are indefensible; and Mr. Clay, who has devoted a chapter to the signal for trumps, has ingeniously endeavored to show that it has arisen out of ordinary play, and so comes within the permissible category. But irrespective of the fact that there are several admitted intimations which cannot be traced to ordinary rules, we do not see any logical ground for such a distinction; for whenever a natural mode of play is pushed so far as to require a special, præarranged understanding to make it intelligible, it becomes as strictly conventional as if it were of empirical origin. In short, no line can be drawn, and, therefore, either the conventional mode of conveying information should be admitted generally, or it ought to be abolished altogether. But the latter course would be clearly impossible, as nobody could be prevented from playing indifferent cards in some regular way, which he might expect his partner to comprehend.

It is astonishing what an insight a player may obtain into the state, not only of his partner's hand, but also of those of his opponents, if, guided by the established rules, he carefully observes the fall of the cards, and draws the proper inferences therefrom. Mr. Clay's first chapter, and Dr. Pole's Table of Inferences, put this very forcibly. It may fairly be said that by the time half the hand is over, the general character and probable results of the whole play will be revealed. During the first half, corresponding to the rise of the projectile, the play is tentative, and the player is acquiring information, which in the latter or descending portion he has to apply.

In the above remarks we have taken no notice of what may be called the *accidents* of the game, such, for example, as finessing, taking advantage of peculiar situations, &c. Rules for these things formed the staple of ancient whist; the modern game has by no means superseded them; they must be well studied by every one who aspires to be a good player, and the new system gives more scope for them, by increasing the knowledge which leads to their successful application. They are treated of fully in whist-books, and do not require further notice. It would be vain to attempt to describe all the infinite varieties of bad play; but it may be useful to give a few of its most salient characteristics, and this we may do by dividing whist-players into 4 classes, with, however, the proviso that such a classification must be only approximate, and far from exhaustive in the lower grades. Beginning with the worst, the 4th class appear to have derived their ideas of playing from certain oral traditions, which, though widely spread, and, doubtless, of great antiquity, it is difficult to trace to any definite origin. Probably they may be the handing-down of the rudest practice in the infancy of the game. We have, as a matter of curiosity, paid some attention to the habits of this class, and the fol-

lowing may be taken as a summary of their chief rules, which, we believe, now appear in print for the first time:—

"If you have an ace and king of any plain suit, lead them out at once. If not, lead from the best *card* you hold, in the hope of making it some time; or lead a single card for ruffing.

"But if, fortunately, your partner has led before you, you have only to return his lead, and need not take the trouble of scheming a lead of your own.

"Never lead trumps, even if led first by your partner; it is wasting them, as they might make tricks by trumping.

"In all other cases, do the best you can."

The only idea of skill possessed by these players is in recollecting the high cards that are out, and in discovering when the partner is likely to be short of a suit that they may force him to trump; they are quite indifferent as to the play of sequences and small cards, and wonder at anybody attaching importance to such trifles. This class forms the great mass of domestic players; they are generally very fond of the game, and practice it a great deal; but their improvement is almost hopeless, as it is so hard to get them to take the first step,—*i. e.*, to unlearn everything they already know.

The 3d class are more deserving of respect. They are very observant, recollect and calculate well, draw shrewd inferences as to how the cards lie, and generally are adepts in all the *accidental* features of good play. Their management of trumps is diametrically opposed to that of the fourth class, as they have a great liking for leading them, a course almost always advantageous for them with inferior adversaries. But skillful as these players are, they commit, as Deschapelles says, "one long and continual fault which they do not see," they are "forts joueurs qui sont de détestables partenaires." They do not play upon *system*; they will not conform to the conventional language of the game; and hence they lose the great advantage of the combination of their own with their partner's hands. They, indeed, usually object to system altogether, arguing that the play should be dictated by their own judgment. A player of this class will often lead from short suits, or will lead trumps when weak, or abstain from leading them when strong, or will even refuse to return his partner's lead in them: or, in fact, will adopt any other mode of playing for his hand alone. "the worst fault," says Mr. Clay, "which I know in a whist-player." We lately saw a fatal instance of the evil of this style of play. A good player of this class opened by leading the king of spades, which he followed by the queen. His partner, a systematic player, who had originally ace and two small ones, with four trumps, gave him credit for the knave, and probably one or two others; he, therefore, put the ace on the queen, to get it out of his partner's way, then succeeded in drawing all the trumps, and returned the third little spade. The original player had no more, and the adversaries brought in several cards of the suit and won the game. If players of this class knew how

easily they might step into the rank of first-class adepts, by simply adopting the orthodox system, they might be induced to devote a few hours to its acquisition; but the great obstacle to their improvement is the pride they take in their own skill, which they object to make subservient to a set of rules, and, perhaps, in some instances, to the will of a partner inferior to themselves.

The 2d class are those who play according to correct system, but who, from want either of practice or of talent, do not shine in individual skill. This is generally the case with the young who are properly taught, and their number is happily increasing every day. Two such players would unquestionably win over two much superior adversaries of the 3d class; and they make so admirable partners, that a fine player working with one of them, would of himself realize almost the full advantage of the combination of the hands. This class are eminently hopeful; they are already entitled to the name of good, sound players, and if they have only moderate abilities, they must continually improve.

The first, or highest class, are those who, to the soundness and system of the second class, add the personal skill of the third. They then become *fine* players, and, although there may be among them many grades of excellence, they may, as a class, be said to have arrived at the summit of the scale. We may refer to Mr. Clay's book for an exemplification of what a fine player should be.

To improve any large number of whist-players in the lower classes is more than can be hoped for; few of the old hands are open to conviction or anxious for instruction. But for the benefit of younger aspirants, and of others who may have the ambition to rise out of the dull ranks of the incapables, we will offer a few words of guidance.

First, we say to the student, you must be convinced that you have something to learn. It is the want of appreciation of this truth that accounts for such a general prevalence of bad play. People fancy they can become good players by mere practice, which is a great mistake; they only move on in one eternal blundering round. The scientific game has been the result of years upon years of elaborate thought and incessant experiment, and you can no more arrive at it by your own limited experience, than you could become acquainted with scientific astronomy by watching the apparent motion of the stars. And, further, if you have already learnt and practiced whist on the erroneous principle of considering merely your own hand, you must wipe out all that, and make a tabula rasa on which true knowledge can be inscribed. The next thing to be done is to make yourself acquainted with the recognized system of modern play, embodying the complete *language* of the game. This is the all-important thing; the three great points of modern whist are system, system, system. You will

be surprised to find. if you approach the subject with a docile disposition, how easy this system is to acquire; the difficulties only arise from its clashing with pre-conceived notions; some dozen sentences embody its chief features, and when their spirit is once well impressed on the mind, the great portion of the learning is done. * When whist playing is studied on system, to use Dr. Pole's words,—"It is astonishing in how different a light the game appears. Its acquisition, instead of being laborious and repulsive, becomes easy and pleasant; the student, instead of being frightened at difficulties, finds them vanish before him: and even those, who, having formerly practiced without method, take the trouble of learning the system, suddenly see the light break in upon them, and find themselves repaid a hundred fold in the increased enjoyment and satisfaction the game will afford them." Practice as much as possible, with good players, but do not be turned aside from correct play by unsound criticism, or by unfavorable results, both of which you will often have to encounter. Neither be discouraged by finding at first your memory at fault. Systematic play aids this largely, by showing to what points it is most important to direct attention; first the trumps, next the higher cards of your own long suit, then those of your partner's and so on. Trust to your natural memory only, avoiding everything artificial, except carefully sorting and counting your cards at the beginning of the hand.

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* The following short memoranda of some of the most important points of the modern game might be committed to memory, or printed on a card for easy reference:—

1. Lead from your most numerous suit. Begin with the lowest, unless you have several high cards, as mentioned in the text.

2. Lead your own suit before you return your partner's, *unless he leads trumps*, which return immediately.

3. In returning your partner's suit, if you have only two left, return the *highest*; if more, the lowest.

4. But in any position, if you hold the best card, play it the second round.

5. *Holding five trumps, lead them*, or call for them.

6. Look out for your partner's call for trumps, especially if weak in them yourself If he calls, and you hold not more than three trumps, lead the *highest*; if more, the lowest.

7. Second hand, generally play your lowest.

8. Do not trump a doubtful trick second hand, if you hold more than three trumps; with three or less, trump fearlessly.

9. Do not force your partner if you hold less than four trumps yourself; but force a strong *adverse* trump hand whenever you can.

10. Discard from your weakest suit. [But see Note 3.—*Ed.*]

11. If not leading, always play the lowest of a sequence.

12. Be very careful in the play even of your smallest cards, every one of which will convey information to your partner.

II. Whist is really a new game, that is to say, it has been studied scientifically by capable persons only during a generation or so, and it offers a wide field for research and analysis. It has its disadvantages in the shape of stupid traditions, to which superfluous weight is lent by the fact that most players are tossed into playing, and graft on the natural, carnal man's inclination to make all his aces and kings first, and lead from his short suits so as to trump, some superstition bequeathed by his earliest mentor.

The first step taken by the author of "American Whist" [3] is excellent and practical; he would sweep away the whole code and substitute 14 laws, proceeding on the assumption that the whist-player is a gentleman who plays cards for intellectual pleasure. The game is to be played in silence; there are 7 points; honors are not counted, and the penalties are loss of deal for a misdeal, facing or exposing a card; forfeiture of a point for throwing 2 cards, exposing a card, playing out of turn, etc., and of 3 points in the case of revoke. Much—nearly all—of this we approve. We object to honors because they are needless; one side will in the long run hold as many as the other, so that really there is nothing gained or lost. We may add that we are more completely emancipated from whist superstitions than our Boston friend and fellow-player, and that we believe in making the trump from the second pack. [4] There is, of course, the stock argument that by leaving the trump-card exposed, the calculations and combinations of the players are facilitated, but there is nothing in this. Why should A, the dealer, see only the 13 cards in his own hand, while B, C, and D, see 14? It is contended that the exposure of the trump-card is a sort of a penalty for the advantage of the deal, but as the deal comes round to each player in turn, the question of advantage may be eliminated from the problem. There is no reason why one of the 4 players should be guaranteed in advance the possession of a trump. And as the whole beauty of the game consists in the rapid adaptation of a general plan to the exigencies of the instant, the keener intellectual enjoyment must result when the uncertainty is most complete. Every player on taking up his hand and acquainting himself with its character and strength, and the state of the score, forms a plan of campaign, which he may have to modify before the 2d or 3d round has been played. We believe that he will lay out such a plan more successfully, and with more pleasure to himself, when he is in ignorance of the position of the 14th card than when knowledge of its whereabouts affects his play.

Upon 3 points let us express our further hearty agreement with the author of "American Whist." The idiotic rule 74, (a player may ask his partner whether he has not a card of the suit which he has re-

nounced," etc.,) is abolished. This is as it should be. The player's business is to follow suit, and if he is careless, he and his partner must suffer for it. There is no more excuse for the existence of a rule 74, than there would be for a rule allowing the player who has led a commanding card to ask his partner if he had not a smaller one, or whether he had discarded from his weakest suit. And again, "G. W. P." rightly says that "Trumps should always be placed by a player in the same relative position in his hand," thus following Drayson rather than Campbell Walker. The only objection urged against this is that an opponent may gain some information as to the player's strength in trumps, but who would play with such an opponent? The consequences of making an error in trumps are too serious, though, of course, they do not exist where the trump is turned from the second pack, and is always in view. For the mass of players the practice of placing the trumps in an unvarying position is by far the best; let us enter a protest against the custom of changing the position of the "long" cards or commanding cards, and all such devices to weaken the memory under the pretence of assisting it! Finally, it is provided that a trick once taken and turned cannot be seen again till the hand has been played. This is right, and so is every rule that compels a player to pay the strictest attention or suffer the severest penalty. We hope to live to see the day when the penalty for a revoke will be the loss of the game or even the rubber, and when it will not be lawful for a player to ask who played one of the cards on the table. We cannot say that we always agree with our author after he passes page 40 and goes into details, though we strongly approve of his bringing into prominence the fact, so often overlooked by American students of English text-books—that where the game is played without honors, modifications of the precepts must frequently be admitted. We think that our author is rather superstitious about the nine—a card to which he attaches such importance that the confiding reader would be a little puzzled what to do if he obtained a hand without any nines; though that principle is a sound one, which teaches the player to respect his cards even if they are not honors. We are not yet convinced that the French are always wrong in leading the ace from a suit of ace—three small ones, though we are firm believers in qualifying the cast-iron rule about leading trumps from a suit of five. Pole, in his rules, it will be remembered, put the obligation to lead or call in emphatic capitals, and in his fourth chapter defended the practice, and we have seen hundreds of times the familiar quotation, (from Major Lawrence's "Sans Merci,") of Castlemaine's (Clay's) remark, "It has been computed that 1100 young Englishmen, once heirs to fair fortunes, are wandering about the Continent in a state of utter desti-

tution, because they would not lead trumps with five and an honor in their hands." But this very dictum includes an honor among the five, and we decidedly prefer Drayson's very guarded recommendation, "If you hold 6, it would always be right to lead one; but with five, it is a more doubtful proceeding." Campbell Walker, too, is with us, though possibly all good whist-players will agree that if they had their choice they would prefer a middling partner, who systematically led trumps from 5—and indeed generally followed Pole—to one who, without greater capacity, undertook to decide for himself when to depart from the rule. Indeed, Pole is a very good book for the majority of young players, who must first master principles and become safe partners before they are entitled to plan *coups*; and we think that the "machine player" merits better treatment than he receives at the hands of his more brilliant brethern. One does not play one hand or game, and one only, in his lifetime. In the thousands of hands a player may expect to hold, certain situations will recur some hundreds of times—*for him*. He will, for instance, often hold king and a small one, second hand with a small card led. The ace will then sometimes be on his right and sometimes on his left; but he is not responsible for its position and cannot know it. We believe that it is here that the rule [1] is useful, and that having ascertained as one can easily do—the play in any simple case that succeeds most frequently, the best thing a player can do is to put his hopes, fears, and individuality in his pocket, and follow it. He may inform his opponents, but he will not deceive his partner. There are other cases as elementary, where the "machine player's" duty is as plain to break the rule, as where he holds ace, queen and one trick only is needed. But for 95 per cent. of whist-players, in nine cases out of ten, "the rule's the thing," and we know of nothing more melancholy and unpromising than a disposition that is elated by the success of an unsound departure from an established principal of play,—where it is really established,— or dejected by the failure of the correct play to prove successful, The player who is truthful and consistent in his play, is a partner whose price is above rubies, and we will freely forgive his failures on the side of safety. We should, of course, prefer the partner of keen intelligence and perfect self-control, but the difficulty with too many players of high class is that they will not subordinate their plan and hand to their partner's, unless the superiority of the latter is marked. The need of the time is the well-grounded and modest whist-player.

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[1] Part I., is from an article by A. Hayward, Q. C., in "The Quarterly Review," 1871; Part II., is from "The American," 6, 11, 1880.

[3] (1.) A short Treatise on the Game of Whist. 1743. (2.) The Principles of Whist stated and explained, and its Practice illustrated on an Original System, by means of hands played completely through. By Cavendish. London, 1862. (3.) A Treatise on Short Whist. By James Clay, M. P. London, 1864. (4.) The Theory of the Modern Scientific Game of Whist. By William Pole, F. R. S. Mus. Doc. Oxon. London, 1865. (5) By "G. W. P." Boston, 1880.

[3] Further conventions are: (1) having 5 or more, lead lowest but one; *e. g.* having king, 10, 9, 7, you lead 7; partner takes with queen and returns ace, on which you play 9. But having king, 10, 9, 7, 2, your playing 2 on the ace tells partner that you led from 5, not 4. (2) In leading from weak suit, lead the highest. (3) When without trumps, make your first discard the lowest of your longest or best suit, so that, trumps being out, partner may know how to play into your hand.

[4] "The Oracle" [London] of 14, 8, 1880, answers a questioner that this is practiced at no London club. 28, 8, a correspondent writes that the custom prevails on the Continent.

[5] In trumps, play the king, otherwise the low one.

Pole's Riming Rules.

If you the modern game of whist would know,
From this great principle its precepts flow:
Treat your own hand as to your partner's joined,
And play not one alone, but both combined.
Your first lead makes your partner understand
What is the chief component of your hand;
And hence there is necessity the strongest
That your first lead be from your suit that's strongest.
In this, with ace and king, lead king, then ace:
With king and queen, king also has first place;
With ace, queen, knave, lead ace and then the queen;
With ace, four small ones, ace should first be seen;
With queen, knave, ten, you let the queen præcede.
In other cases you the lowest lead.
Ere you return your friend's, your own suit play;
But trumps you must return without delay.
When you return your partner's lead, take pains
To lead him back the best your hand contains,
If you receive not more than three at first;
If you had more you may return the worst,
But if you hold the master card, you're bound
In most cases to play it second round.
Whene'er you want a lead, 'tis seldom wrong
To lead up to the weak or through the strong.
In the second hand your lowest should be played,
Unless you mean "trump signal" to be made;
Or if you've king or queen, or ace and king,
Then one of these will be the proper thing.
Mind well the rules for trumps; you'll often need them;
When you hold five, 'tis often right to lead them,
Or if the lead won't come in time to you,
Then signal to your partner so to do
Watch also for your partner's trump request;
To which, with less than four, play out your best.
To lead through honors turned up is bad play,
Unless you want your trump suit cleared away.
When second hand a doubtful trick you see,
Don't trump it, if you hold more trumps than three;
But having three or less, trump fearlessly.
When weak in trumps yourself, don't force your friend,
But always force the adverse strong trump hand.
For sequences stern custom has decreed
The lowest you must play if you don't lead.
When you discard, weak suits you ought to choose,
For strong ones are too valuable to lose.

GENERAL INDEX.

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