

THE SUNDAY OREGONIAN
4 FEBRUARY 1917

PIRATE BRIDGE

As many of my readers may know, a new card game is looming up in the whist horizon. Whether it is destined to gain the ascendancy over auction remains to be seen.

Its promoters, and those who are sponsoring it, together with a number of other good players, and the vast army of irresponsible players who delight in novelty, say that it will. Others again, among them some of the strongest and best players of the country, affirm that it will not. Still other, chiefly those who recall the strenuous objections advanced towards bridge when it first appeared and there was talk it would supplant whist, and at a later period, towards auction, when bridge in its turn was threatened by auction, and how in each case they finally took up the gauntlet loyally in favor of the newer game, are more conservative in the expression of an opinion and merely say, "they do not know."

The new game is called "pirate bridge." Why it is so called I do not know, unless perhaps the methods a player employs in order to intercept others players and appropriate to him self as partner some one who has been previously appropriated by another player, may be said to be of a nature more or less piratical.

Pirate is built upon auction lines and is therefore a member of the numerous whist family. As such, as well as because of the prominence of its sponsors, and the stir it is creating in the card-playing world, it is deserving of more than passing notice.

The idea of the name, the controlling motive of which is to do away with some of the objectionable features of Auction, originated, it seems, with Aleister Crowley, the English explorer and writer, and a former auction devotee. After experimenting with the idea and becoming more and more imbued with the belief that a game formulated upon the new principles would possess great advantages over auction, he finally took into his confidence Frank Crowninshield, the editor of Vanity Fair. R. F. Foster, known to cardplayers the world over, was later called into the consultation, with the result that he further experimented upon and developed the game, introduced it into several of the leading clubs, and finally launched it upon the card-playing world.

The chief objections to auction which Pirate is supposed to overcome are in the words of Mr. Foster, "misfit hands," "uncongenial partners," and "long drawn-out rubbers."

Pirate, like auction, is a bidding game. There is no fixed partnership, and in making a bid a player considers his own hand alone. A bid to be valid must be accepted, that is to say, some player at the table who thinks his hand well suited to the bid, and therefore desires the particular bidder as his partner (a partnership is in force for the current deal only), indicates it by the words "I accept." By the use of this method "misfit hands" are supposed to be eliminated, as presumably such hands only play together as are best adapted to each other. Thus the winning of each game seems more or less assured, and, naturally, there are few, if any, long drawn-out rubbers.

In the very fact that the hands are so well suited to each other lie many of the objections offered to the game. There is a certain zest and exhilaration attendant upon the winning of a game, which is closely contested, upon the pivotal trick, the winning or losing of which means victory or defeat, which must necessarily be lacking when success is comparatively easy and the cards to a certain extent play themselves. The promoters of the game tell us, however, that in reality it is one of the most difficult of games to play, that to play it successfully calls for skill and finesse of the highest order.

No player can make a higher declaration until the one previously made has been accepted. If a bid is not accepted, it becomes void, and the bidding starts again with the player next in order to the left. When a higher bid is made and not accepted, the bid reverts automatically to the last accepted bidder, etc., etc., etc.

When the preliminaries are finally settled and partnership established, the player to the left of the successful bidder leads to the first trick, unless this player happens to be the acceptor, in which case the player to his left leads. Thereupon, as in auction, the acceptor who now becomes dummy, places his cards face upwards upon the table, and the declarer plays the two hands.

A unique feature of the game is that your partner may be the player to your right, the one sitting opposite you, or the one to your left. Thus, instead of the two partners always playing alternately, as in other games, it will often happen that the one will play directly after the other. It would seem that this would tend to rob the game of many of the finer features as finesse, leading through, etc., but its promoters affirm to the

contrary. This, the dyed-in-the-wool whist player finds it somewhat difficult to believe, and, like the native Missourian, demands "to be shown." Difficulties galore, however, in the way of correct play will doubtless present themselves to the student of the game as the game further unfolds and its intricacies become better known.

Values are the same as in auction. Individual scores are kept, special score cards being used. The acceptor shares the gains equally with the declarer, only his score (trick score and all) is recorded in the honor score. A 50-point bonus is allowed for game, an additional 50 for the rubber game. The acceptor scores for game but not for rubber. Penalties are as in auction.

This is but a brief outline of the game, but it will serve to give some idea of the origin and underlying principles.