

I'm not robot!

GARDNER PREFACE In offering this book to the public the writer uses no sophistry as an excuse for its existence. The hypocritical cant of reformed (?) gamblers, or whining, mealmouthed pretensions of piety, are not foisted as a justification for imparting the knowledge it contains. To all lovers of card games it should prove interesting, and as a basis of card entertainment it is practically inexhaustible. It may caution the unwary who are innocent of guile, and it may inspire the crafty by enlightenment on artifice. It may demonstrate to the tyro that he cannot beat a man at his own game, and it may enable the skilled in deception to take a post-graduate course in the highest and most artistic branches of his vocation. But it will not make the innocent vicious, or transform the pastime player into a professional, or make the fool wise, or curtail the annual crop of suckers; but whatever the result may be, if it sells it will accomplish the primary motive of the author, as he needs the money. INTRODUCTION The passion for play is probably as old, and will be as enduring, as the race of man. Some of us are too timid to risk a dollar, but the percentage of people in this feverish nation who would not enjoy winning one is very small. The passion culminates in the professional. He would rather play than eat. Winning is not his sole delight. Some one has remarked that there is but one pleasure in life greater than winning, that is, in making the hazard. To be successful at play is as difficult as to succeed in any other pursuit. The laws of chance are as immutable as the laws of nature. Were all gamblers to depend on luck they would break about even in the end. The professional card player may enjoy the average luck, but it is difficult to find one who thinks he does, and it is indeed wonderful how mere chance will at times defeat the strongest combination of wit and skill. It is almost an axiom that a novice will win his first stake. A colored attendant of a club-room, overhearing a discussion about running up two hands at poker, ventured the following interpolation: Don't trouble 'bout no two han's, Boss. Get yo'own han'. De suckah, he'll get a han'all right, suah! And many old players believe the same thing. However, the vagaries of luck, or chance, have impressed the professional card player with a certain knowledge that his more respected brother of the stock exchange possesses, viz. — manipulation is more profitable than speculation; so to make both ends meet, and incidentally a good living, he also performs his part with the shears when the lambs come to market. Hazard at play carries sensations that once enjoyed are rarely forgotten. The winnings are known as pretty money, and it is generally spent as freely as water. The average professional who is successful at his own game will, with the sublimest unconcern, stake his money on that of another's, though fully aware the odds are against him. He knows little of the real value of money, and as a rule is generous, careless and improvident. He loves the hazard rather than the stakes. As a matter of fact the principal difference between the professional gambler and the occasional gambler, is that the former is actuated by his love of the game and the latter by cupidity. A professional rarely squeals when he gets the worst of it; the man who has other means of livelihood is the hardest loser. Advantages that are bound to ultimately give a percentage in favor of the professional are absolutely essential to his existence, and the means employed at the card table to obtain that result are thoroughly elucidated in this work. We have not been impelled to our task by the qualms of a guilty conscience, nor through the hope of reforming the world. Man cannot change his temperament, and few care to control it. While the passion for hazard exists it will find gratification. We have neither grievance against the fraternity nor sympathy for so-called victims. A varied experience has impressed us with the belief that all men who play for any considerable stakes are looking for the best of it. We give the facts and conditions of our subject as we find them, though we sorrowfully admit that our own early knowledge was acquired at the usual excessive cost to the uninitiated. When we speak of professional card players we do not refer to the proprietors or managers of gaming houses. The percentage in their favor is a known quantity, or can be readily calculated, and their profits are much the same as any business enterprise. Where the civil authorities countenance these institutions they are generally conducted by men of well known standing in the community. The card tables pay a percentage or rake off, and the management provides a look out for the protection of its patrons. Where the gaming rooms must be conducted in secret the probabilities of the player's apparent chances being lessened are much greater. However, our purpose is to account for the unknown percentage that must needs be in favor of the professional card player to enable him to live. There is a vast difference between the methods employed by the card conjurer in mystifying or amusing his audience; and those practiced at the card table by the professional, as in this case the entire conduct must be in perfect harmony with the usual procedure of the game. The slightest action that appears irregular, the least effort to distract attention, or the first unnatural movement, will create suspicion; and mere suspicion will deplete the company, as no one but a simon-pure fool will knowingly play against more than ordinary chances. There is one way by which absolute protection against unknown advantages may be assured, that is by never playing for money. But a perfect understanding of the risks that are taken may aid greatly in lessening the casualties. An intimate acquaintance with the modus operandi of card-table artifice does not necessarily enable one to detect the manipulation, but it certainly makes plain the chances to be guarded against, and with this cognition the mere suspicion of skill should at once induce symptoms of cold feet. This knowledge, or thorough comprehension of the possibilities of professional card playing, can be imparted only by practical illustration of the processes employed, and the reader desiring a complete understanding should take the deck in hand and work out for himself the action as it is described. To discriminate and show clearly the two phases of card manipulation, the first part of this work is devoted to an exhaustive review of the many advantages that can be, have been, and are constantly taken at the card table, and to those particular methods of obtaining these advantages that are least liable to arouse suspicion. The exact manner in which each artifice is performed is fully described in minutia. Part second describes the sleights employed in conjuring and many very interesting card tricks. CARD-TABLE ARTIFICE Professional Secrets. — The secrets of professional card playing have been well preserved. Works on conjuring invariably devote much space to the consideration of card tricks, and many have been written exclusively for that purpose, yet we have been unable to find in the whole category more than an incidental reference to any card-table artifice; and in no instance are the principal feats even mentioned. Self-styled ex-professionals have regaled the public with astounding disclosures of their former wiles and wickedness, and have proven a wonderful knowledge of the subject by exhuming some antiquated moss-covered ruses as well known as nursery rhymes, and even these extraordinary revelations are calmly dismissed with the assertion that this or that artifice is employed; in nowise attempting to explain the process or give the detail of the action mentioned. If terrific denunciation of erstwhile associates, and a diatribe on the awful consequences of gambling are a criterion of ability, these purified prodigals must have been very dangerous companions at the card table. Of course it is generally known that much deception is practiced at cards, but it is one thing to have that knowledge and quite another to obtain a perfect understanding of the methods employed, and the exact manner in which they are executed. Hence this work stands unique in the list of card books. We modestly claim originality for the particular manner of accomplishing many of the manoeuvres described, and believe them vastly superior to others that have come under our observation. We do not claim to know it all. Many professionals have attained their success by improving old methods, or inventing new ones; and as certain artifices are first disclosed in this work so will others remain private property as long as the originators are so disposed. We betray no confidences in publishing this book, having only ourselves to thank for what we know. Our tuition was received in the cold school of experience. We started in with the trusting nature of a fledgling, and a calm assurance born of overweening faith in our own potency. We bucked the tiger voluntarily, and censure no one for the inevitable result. A self-satisfied unlicked cub with a fairly fat bank roll was too good a thing to be passed up. We naturally began to imbibe wisdom in copious draughts at the customary sucker rates, but the jars to our pocketbook caused far less anguish than the heartrending jolts to our insufferable conceit. After the awakening our education progressed through close application and constant study of the game, and the sum of our present knowledge is proffered in this volume, for any purpose it may answer, to friend and foe, to the wise and the foolish, to the good and the bad, to all alike, with but one reservation, — that he has the price. Hold Outs. — Many mechanical contrivances termed hold outs have been invented to aid the card player. The simplest form is a steel spring with an awl-like attachment at one end which can be pressed into the under side of almost any table in an instant. The spring snaps up against the table, the end curving slightly downwards to receive the cards. The thumb of either hand can put in or take several cards from the apparatus without the hands leaving the table. A more complicated table machine passes the cards from below completely over the edge of the table, and the hands, held naturally on the table top, receive and make the discard without a sign to denote the procedure. Hold outs that are adjusted to the person are of most ingenious construction and very expensive. A sleeve machine which passes the cards into and from the palm by spreading the knees may be worth from seventy-five dollars to several hundred dollars. Some are worked by arm pressure, some pass the cards through an opening in the vest about the usual height the hands are held. One of the most novel and perfect machines ever constructed makes the sneak by simply expanding the chest an inch or two, or taking a deeper breath than usual. In almost all cases where hold outs are used the principal skill possessed by the player is that of working his apparatus perfectly and secreting the extra cards while in his hands; but to employ a machine successfully requires considerable address, and especially nerve. However, a full description of these devices or their uses is not contemplated by us. They can be purchased from the dealers in club-room articles, and, anyway, the expert professional disdains their assistance. They are cumbersome, unnecessary, and a constant menace to his reputation. Prepared Cards. — The subject of prepared cards is almost as foreign to the main purpose of this work as the preceding one of hold outs, but a cursory review of the commoner kinds and their uses may not be out of place. Marked cards, generally known as readers, can be distinguished by the backs as readily as by the faces when the key is known. Printed cards are manufactured, but these are rarely used by professionals. The designs are not the same as those now of standard make, and consequently would be difficult to introduce. The usual plan is to mark the standard decks by hand. For the benefit of the unenlightened or curious reader we shall describe the process. It is not at all difficult, and a deck can be doctored in an hour or so. Nearly all standard cards are red or blue. Marking inks absolutely indistinguishable from the printer's ink can be obtained from any of the dealers. Cards of intricate design are best adapted for the purpose. Each card is marked at both ends, so as to be read in any position. The peculiarity of the figures or design across the end is first closely considered, and twelve fairly distinct points, or dots or dashes, are noted and located. Then the four Aces are laid out, and with a fine pen the first point located is shortened barely enough to notice. The point is white and the background red or blue, the color of the ink used, and the slightest shortening of a single point or the obliteration of a single dot on a card, is undetectable unless it is known. The four Aces are treated in this manner, then turned end for end, and the operation repeated. Then the Kings are doctored, the second point located being shortened in this instance. Then the four Queens at the third point, and so on throughout the deck for the twelve values; the absence of any mark denoting the Deuce. Now the suits are marked. Three additional points are located, possibly close to one corner. The first point marked say for Diamonds, the second for Clubs, third for Hearts and Spades left natural. Thus the operator at a glance, by noting the location of the two blockouts, can instantly name the cards as they are dealt. Combination systems lessen the number of points to be located. The design of the particular deck will suggest whether a dot, line, or blockout, would be least noticeable. It is seldom that two operators work alike. Cleverly done, it is almost impossible to detect, and unless suspicion is aroused quite so. Most of the supply houses keep a skilled operator constantly employed, and will mark any deck to order for about one dollar. Some players make a practice of marking cards during the process of the game. The most desirable cards are created or indented at certain locations as they happen to come into the player's possession, with the finger or thumb nail, which is kept pointed for the purpose; and in the course of an hour the principal cards can be readily distinguished. Another plan is to darken the edges with different prepared inks that are conveniently adjusted in pads. These manoeuvres, while making nothing sure in a given instance, always net the operator a favorable percentage in the long run. Prepared cards known as Strippers are much used by certain players. The desired cards are placed aside and the rest of the cards trimmed slightly along the sides; then the briefs are trimmed from nothing at middle of sides to the width of the cut deck at ends. This leaves a slight hump at sides of the desired cards when shuffled in the deck, and they can be drawn out at will and placed on top or bottom at option. The trimming is done with machines made for the purpose, and the cutting leaves the edges and the corners as smooth as glass. There are many other methods of doctoring cards to meet the requirements of particular games, and the skill, or rather want of it, of the operator. By roughening the faces of some of the cards they will hold together, and are more easily retained while shuffling. Faro cards, used in connection with a certain form of brace box, are treated in this manner. In the construction of the various kinds of control boxes the acme of ingenuity and mechanical skill has been reached, and most extravagant prices are demanded and paid, for these innocent-appearing little silver-plated articles. Strippers may be used in Faro with little fear of detection, as the cards are never shuffled or cut by the players. A crooked box and a clever dealer can give the house a percentage that would impoverish a prince. Millions of dollars are wagered annually at Faro in this country. It is the most fascinating of layout games. However, we have reason to believe it is generally dealt on the square in gambling rooms that are run openly. The bank's percentage is satisfactory to the proprietors. The Cold Deck is a pre-arranged pack that is introduced at an opportune moment. The cards are not marked, but two or more hands are set up ready for dealing. The name is probably derived from the fact that the deck must await its opportunity long enough to contract a chill in the interim. Little skill is required in making the exchange. It is almost invariably done quite openly, and in company where the attendants and players are in collusion. In most gaming rooms the decks are exchanged every hour or less. Sometimes the players will call for a new deck, but usually the exchange is made at the instance of the management. When the cold deck is sprung a blind shuffle is made by the dealer, a blind cut by an ally, and the hands fall in the desired order. Of course an exchange may be made by sleight-of-hand, but the player who can accomplish this feat successfully is generally well versed in the higher orders of card-table artifice, and will dispense with such makeshifts as cold decks or any kind of prepared cards. Confederacy. — When two card experts work together their difficulties are greatly lessened. The opportunities of securing the desirable cards on the outset, that is before the shuffle, are doubled, and this is half the battle. If they understand each other perfectly they can

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