

Baker Street *Elementary*

PRESENTS
"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"



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THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON
124 - A NOT-SO-GENTLEMANLY GAME OF CARDS - AUGUST, 2023



**WELCOME TO TOPIC NUMBER # 123... TODAY WE
WILL BE LOOKING AT THE CARD GAME, WHIST,
WHICH WAS EXTREMELY POPULAR DURING THE
VICTORIAN PERIOD.**



THE CARD GAME WHIST LAY BEHIND TWO DEATHS IN THE CANON: RONALD ADAIR'S IN "THE ADVENTURE OF THE EMPTY HOUSE" AND BRENDA TREGENNIS' IN "THE ADVENTURE OF THE DEVIL'S FOOT."



COLONEL SABASTIAN MORAN SHOT ADAIR WHEN HE CONFRONTED HIM ABOUT CHEATING AT THE CARD GAME, AND BRENDA TREGENNIS DIED WHILE PLAYING THE GAME AFTER INHALING FUMES FROM A POISONOUS ROOT.



*DESPITE SUCH DEADLY CONSEQUENCES, WHIST
WAS THE MOST POPULAR CARD GAME AMONG
VICTORIAN ELITE.*



CARD PLAYING HAS A LONG HISTORY, WITH THE FIRST RECORDED IN CHINA AROUND 800 CE, AND GAMBLING EVEN LONGER... MORE THAN 4000 YEARS AGO.



WHIST'S LIFESPAN, ON THE OTHER HAND, WAS RATHER SHORT, SPANNING A PERIOD BETWEEN THE 1700s TO THE 1900s WHEN IT WAS SUPERSEDED BY BRIDGE.



*ORIGINALLY A GAME FOR COMMON MEN, WHIST
GAINED IN POPULARITY WHEN GENTLEMEN TOOK IT
UP FOR AMUSEMENT AT COFFEE HOUSES AND
CARRIED IT INTO THEIR CLUBS.*



THE GAME BECAME ASSOCIATED WITH STRATEGY
AND MENTAL SKILLS AND, THUS, APPROPRIATE
FOR THE UPPER CLASSES.



WHIST:
ITS HISTORY AND PRACTICE
BY AN AMATEUR,



ITS ILLUSTRATIONS DESIGNED BY KENNY MEADOWS, AND
ENGRAVED BY ORRIN SMITH AND W. LINTON.

New Edition.

“The *play's* the thing.”—HAMLET.

LONDON:
D. BOGUE, 86, FLEET STREET.

MDCCCXLIV.

*TO PLAY, AND WIN, REQUIRED "A GOOD
MEMORY, SYMPATHETIC PARTNERING, AND
PSYCHOLOGICAL ACUMEN."*



PLAYERS ALSO DEVELOPED STRATEGIES TO CHEAT DESPITE EDWARD HOYLE'S... THE FIRST TO SET DOWN THE RULES FOR THE GAME... CONDEMNATION OF SUCH ACTIONS.



A SHORT
TREATISE

On the GAME of

WHIST.

CONTAINING

The **LAW S** of the **GAME** :

AND ALSO

Some **RULES**, whereby a **Beginner** may, with due **Attention** to them, attain to the **Playing** it well.

CALCULATIONS for those who will **Bet** the **Odds** on any **Point** of the **Score** of the **Game** then **playing** and **depending**.

CASES stated, to shew what may be effected by a very good **Player** in **Critical** **Parts** of the **Game**.

REFERENCES to **CASES**, viz. at the **End** of the **Rule** you are directed how to find them.

CALCULATIONS, directing with moral **Certainty**, how to play well any **Hand** or **Game**, by shewing the **Chances** of your **Partner's** having 1, 2, or 3 **Certain** **Cards**.

With **Variety** of **Cases** added in the **Appendix**.

By a **GENTLEMAN**.

BATH printed, and **LONDON** reprinted
For **W. WERTER** near **St. Paul's**, and sold by all the
Bookfellers and **Pamphlet** **Shops** in **Town** and **Country**.
MDCCKLIII.

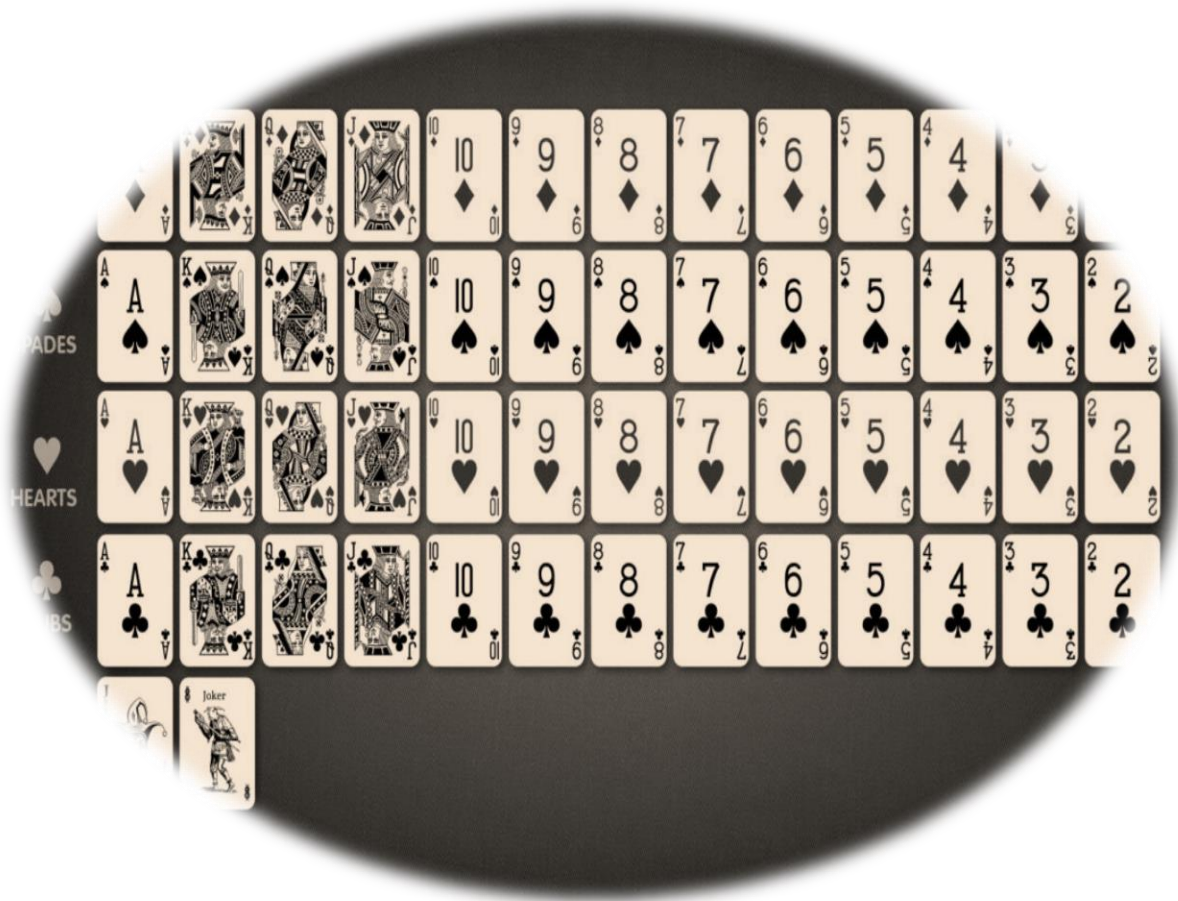
SIMILAR TO BRIDGE OR SPADES, WHIST INVOLVED TWO TEAMS ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT "TRICKS..." THE GAME INVOLVED A STANDARD 52-CARD DECK (WITH ACE BEING THE HIGHEST CARD).



TEAMS WERE DETERMINED BY CUTTING THE CARDS,
WITH THE TWO SELECTING THE HIGHEST CARDS
AND THE OTHER TWO BECOMING PARTNERS.



THE CARDS WERE SHUFFLED AND DISTRIBUTED TO EACH PLAYER, WITH THE LAST CARD LEFT FACE UP ON THE TABLE DURING THE FIRST TRICK... AND THEN RETURNED TO THE DEALER'S HAND.



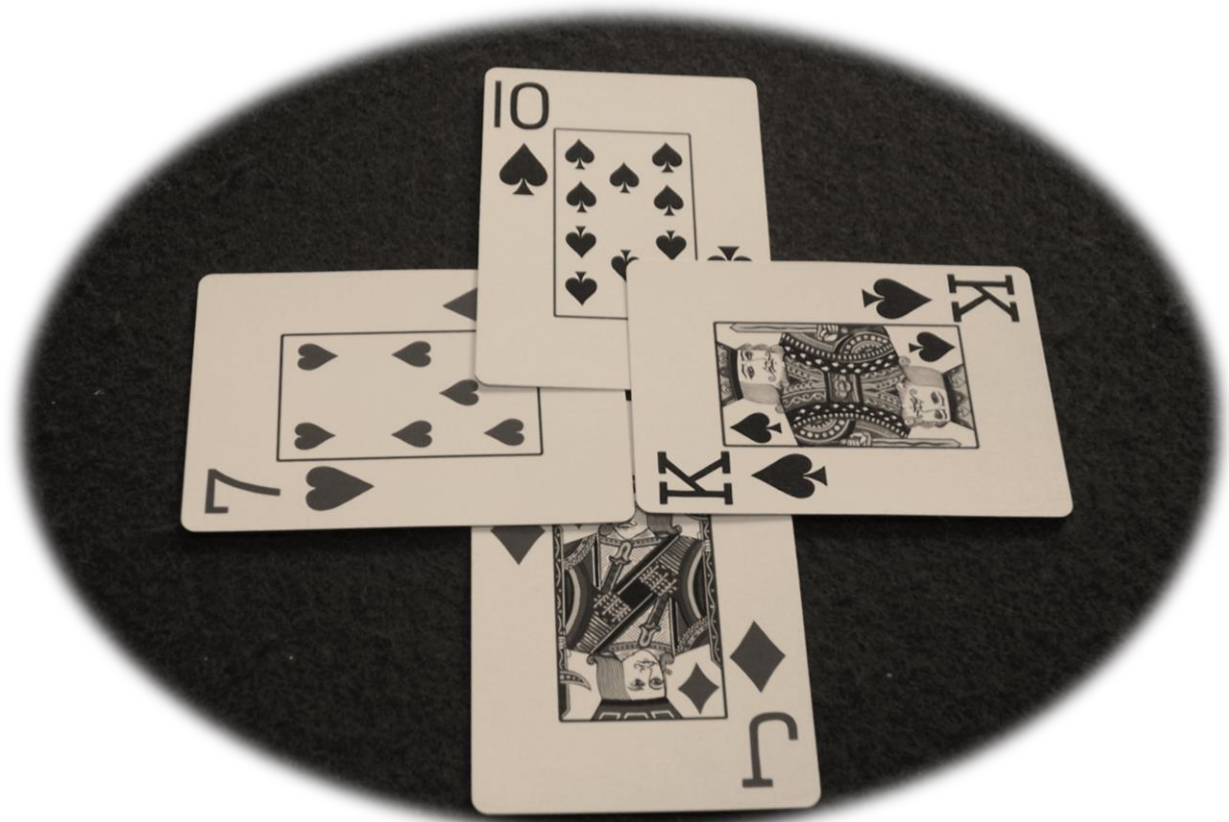
THIS CARD DETERMINED THE "TRUMP SUIT" FOR THE GAME... A CARD FROM THE TRUMP SUIT WON THE TRICK, REGARDLESS OF ANY OTHER CARD PLAYED. THE PLAYER TO THE DEALER'S LEFT, BEGAN PLAY BY SETTING DOWN A CARD.



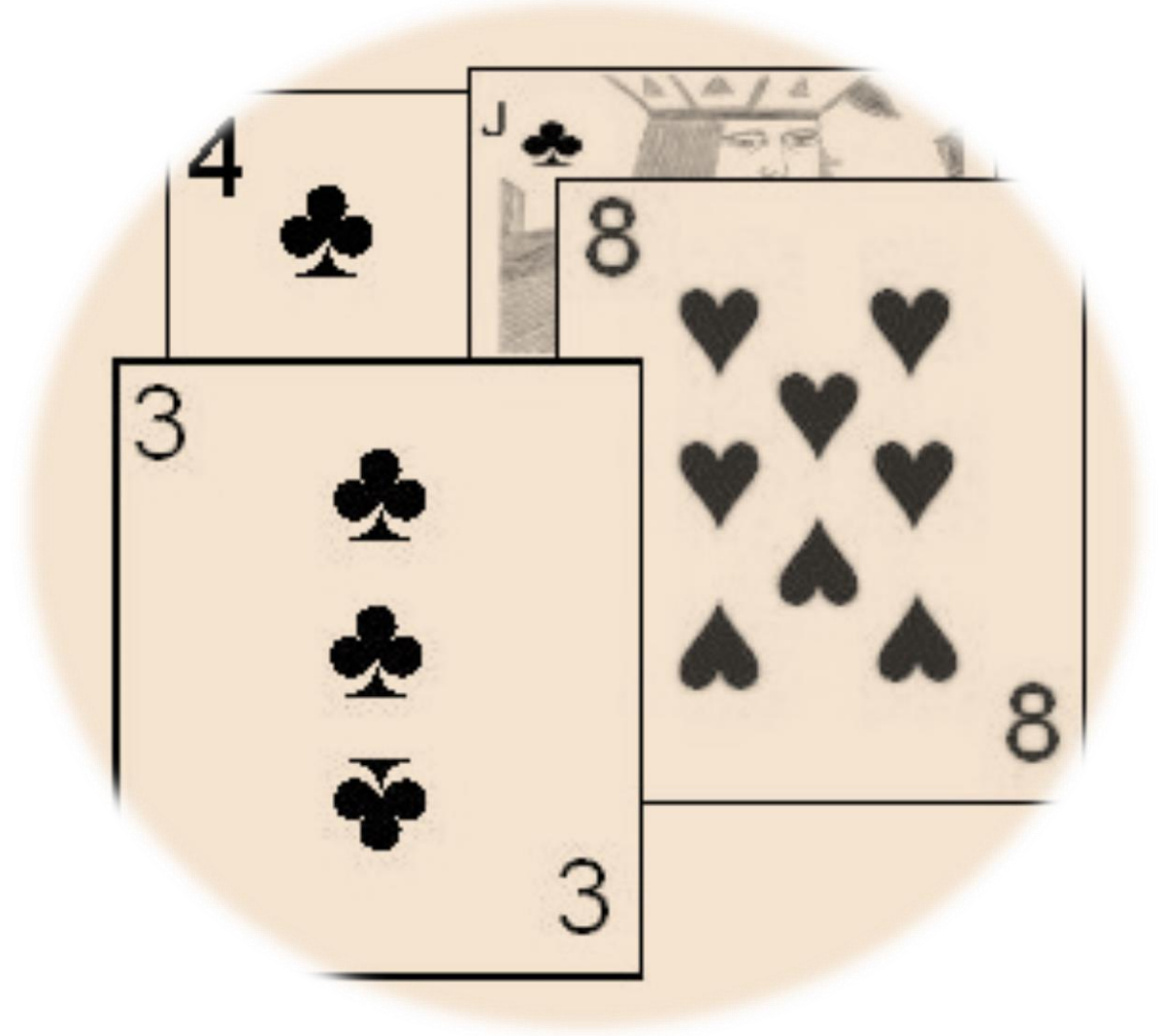
THE OTHERS PLAYED A CARD IN THE SAME SUIT
UNLESS THEY DIDN'T HAVE ONE... THE TRICK
WAS TAKEN BY THE HIGHEST CARD, AND PLAY
CONTINUED UNTIL ALL THIRTEEN TRICKS HAD
BEEN COLLECTED.



THE TEAM WITH THE MOST TRICKS AFTER THE ROUND WON AND WAS AWARDED A POINT FOR ALL TRICKS TAKEN AFTER THE FIRST SIX... CALLED "MAKING BOOK".



ADDITIONAL POINTS COULD BE WON BY COLLECTING EITHER THREE... FOR TWO POINTS... OR FOUR... FOUR POINTS... OF THE "HONOURS"... ACE, KING, QUEEN, AND JACK IN THE TRUMP SUIT.



THE FIRST TEAM TO ACCUMULATE TEN POINTS... IN STANDARD WHIST OR FIVE IN SHORT WHIST WON THE GAME... IN A "RUBBER OF WHIST," THE WINNING TEAM WAS DETERMINED BY THE BEST OF THREE GAMES.



FOR THE ARISTOCRACY, BETTING ON WHIST GAMES WAS CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE BECAUSE IT REQUIRED STRATEGY INSTEAD OF THOSE DEPENDING ON CHANCE, PROVIDED BY DICE, PREFERRED BY THE LOWER CLASSES.





THE ELITE'S PARTICIPATION IN SUCH GAMES
MEANT THE STAKES IN WHIST COULD BE
HIGH... BETS AS GREAT AS £100,000—SUCH AS
THOSE BY THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON—WERE
THE STUFF OF LEGEND,





AND CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE INCLUDED MANY MORALITY TALES OF YOUNG ARISTOCRATS MEETING THEIR RUIN FROM SUCH EXCESSES.



THIS SORT OF EXTRAVAGANT GAMBLING WAS VIEWED AS THREATENING THE COUNTRY'S WHOLE SOCIAL FABRIC.





THE ARISTOCRACY'S WEALTH AND HIERARCHY WERE BASED ON LAND OWNERSHIP AND THE SIZE OF ONE'S HOLDINGS... GAMBLING LOSSES PAID BY LAND TRANSFERS COULD LEAD TO SHIFTS IN BOTH PROPERTY LINES AND STATUS WITHIN THE NOBILITY AND, THUS, ENDANGERED THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THOSE IN POWER.



GIVEN SUCH STAKES, CHEATING BECAME A FIXTURE WITHIN THE CLUBS... DESPITE HOYLE'S TREATISE AND RULES TO THE CONTRARY, A VARIETY OF TECHNIQUES WERE AVAILABLE FOR PLAYERS TO "GAIN THE UPPER HAND."



SECRET SIGNALS, SUCH AS A KICK UNDER THE TABLE, MIGHT BE PASSED TO ONE'S PARTNER, OR THROUGH CODES DISGUISED AS COMMENTS DURING PLAY, SUCH AS EXCLAIMING "MY DEAR SIR," OR INCLUDING A CERTAIN WORD LIKE "TRULY" TO INDICATE A PARTICULAR SUIT.



SIGNALS USING AN OBJECT, FOR EXAMPLE A HANDKERCHIEF, OR USING A CERTAIN NUMBER OF FINGERS WHEN PLAYING A CARD, COULD INFORM A PARTNER OF A GOOD HAND OR THE NUMBER OF TRUMP CARDS POSSESSED.



FINALLY, IF SKILLED IN THE ART OF SHUFFLING AND DEALING, THE CHEATER COULD CONTROL WHICH CARDS WERE DEALT TO HIM AND HIS PARTNER.



ACCORDING TO WATSON, RONALD ADAIR'S
OWN CARD PLAYING WAS BOTH HONORABLE
AND MODEST.





HIS LOSSES OR WINNINGS WERE WELL WITHIN HIS INCOME, DESPITE BEING A MEMBER OF SEVERAL CLUBS AND PLAYING ALMOST EVERY DAY—UNTIL HE WAS PAIRED WITH COLONEL MORAN AND WON MUCH MORE THAN HIS USUAL FIVE POUNDS.





WHILE THE TECHNIQUE MORAN USED TO WIN AT THE BAGATELLE CARD CLUB WAS NOT SPECIFIED, RONALD ADAIR WAS CLEVER ENOUGH TO SPOT IT AND PAID WITH HIS LIFE.



SO, WE HAVE COMPLETED TOPIC # 123 IN OUR SERIES...

IN TOPIC # 124, WE WILL BE LOOKING AT LEPROSY AND ITS
CONSEQUENCES DURING THE VICTORIAN PERIOD.



ORIGINAL SOURCE MATERIAL FOR FOR THIS TOPIC:

- [HTTPS://WWW.GAMBLING.NET/HISTORY/](https://www.gambling.net/history/)
- [HTTPS://WWW.BRITANNICA.COM/TOPIC/WHIST](https://www.britannica.com/topic/whist)
- [HTTPS://LONDONHISTORIANS.WORDPRESS.COM/2014/06/05/GAMBLING-IN-LONDONS-MOST-RUINOUS-GENTLEMENS-CLUBS/](https://londonhistorians.wordpress.com/2014/06/05/gambling-in-londons-most-ruinous-gentlemens-clubs/)
- [HTTPS://REGENCY-EXPLORER.NET/WHIST/](https://regency-explorer.net/whist/)
- [HTTPS://WWW.KRISTENKOSTER.COM/A-REGENCY-PRIMER-ON-HOW-TO-PLAY-WHIST/](https://www.kristenkoster.com/a-regency-primer-on-how-to-play-whist/)
- [HTTPS://SCHOLARWORKS.IU.EDU/DSPACE/HANDLE/2022/25690](https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/handle/2022/25690)
- [HTTPS://MUSE.JHU.EDU/ARTICLE/678621/PDF](https://muse.jhu.edu/article/678621/pdf)



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"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"

IS CREATED THROUGH THE INGENUITY & HARD WORK OF:

JOE FAY

LIESE SHERWOOD-FABRE

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