

The Bridge Addict

by Harold T. Pendergast

The latest in our series featuring articles on bridge published in the 1930s, when contract bridge was headline news and Culbertson's works dominated the New York Times Bestseller list, is an amusing look at that strange new animal, the contract bridge player. It was published in 1932 in the San Francisco News Yearly Review.

Let nobody think that science has been baffled by contract bridge. The other day, a well-known psychiatrist declared that it was inaccurate to call bridge players crazy. "Insanity is relative," he stated, "and there are hundreds of people who are more insane than bridge players. Well, anyhow, at least twenty." The victim of contract bridge, he continued, is easily identified by these clear symptoms:

1. Almost immediately after lunch the patient loses interest in his surroundings and becomes incapable of performing the simplest routine task. If detained at this stage, he sinks into a stupor from which he can be aroused by the noise of cards sharply riffled.

2. If not detained, the patient rushes off at once to a sort of pest-house, sometimes called a "club," which serves as a quarantine center (somewhat like a leper colony). Most patients show great animation at this stage and appear to be in full possession of their faculties.

3. At the pest-house, the addicts group themselves at small tables and scream hysterically every five or ten minutes. This is less dangerous than it seems.

4. On leaving the pest-house, two hours late for dinner, the patient begins a monologue in a language which closely resembles English. In advanced cases, this persists through the early hours of the patient's sleep.

5. During most of his sleep, the patient seems quite normal—except for an intermittent twitch.