

The game of "Jass"

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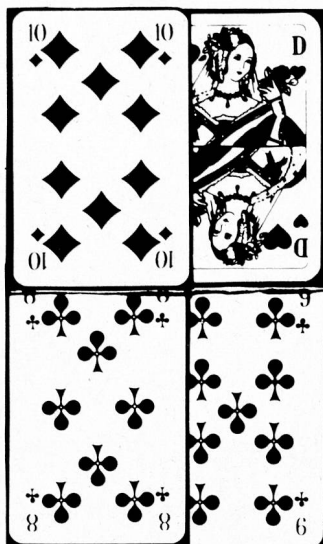
Features

The Game of «Jass»

Card games are probably of Arab origin. In France they appeared only in the 14th century. The first game of this kind was piquet. Then followed the troopers' game (*Landsknechtspiel*), finally the «Lomber» from Spain, from which came the word «Manille», also a Spanish expression. The English games whist and boston have been known on the continent since the 19th century, bridge on the other hand has only been played since the beginning of this century. Other games, such as the «Manille» and «Belotte» related to «Jass» seem to have come up only after 1914.

The Swiss, known as great travelers, mercenaries and also as apostles of peace, no doubt introduced foreign games, and they have adapted these habits to the mentality of native friends of card games. By a most peculiar phenomenon a Swiss national card game originated: the «Jass» (a term which is occasionally spelt with a «Y» ...). It has had a slow development, and that distinguishes it from the games in neighbouring countries. Nevertheless it has kept certain similarities with them.

«Jass» first spread above all in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. This explains some of the specific expressions abhorred by the Académie Française and the linguistic purists: «Blind», «Bock», «Buur», «Naell», etc. In the French-speaking part of Switzerland, only piquet was played for a long time. «Jass» is indeed a national game whose rules allow numerous regional interpretations. A short time ago, Cafés distributed unofficial regulations which were occasionally accepted by cantonal associations of restaurant keepers. Generally the text was exhibited in badly lit spots, difficult to get to. Evidently only few «Jasser» read



the regulations. From that angle one has to try and understand the flourishing of local interpretations. Of course, there exist many agreements which serve good understanding between playing partners. These arrangements are not written down anywhere, yet they may be considered completely correct.

In some Cantons of the German-speaking part of Switzerland, playing-cards are used with pictures which are different from those in use in the French-speaking part. This type of card seems to be gradually making room for the «French» game. What is known occasionally in French-speaking Switzerland as «bour» and «dame», is often called «ober» and «unter» in German-speaking Switzerland. On the other hand, the types of «Jass» games and playing outlines are much the same in the whole of the country.

A «Jass» pack contains 36 cards, divided into four subjects: hearts, diamonds, clubs and spades in French-speaking Switzerland and rose, bell, acorn and shield in German-speaking Switzerland. Colours are of equal value, apart from individual agreements and that one of them may be declared trumps.

There are many kinds of «Jass»: «Kreuzjass» (classical game, contest game) – «Schieber» (classical game, spade doubled, etc.) – King's «Jass» (with or without stake, stake with honours) – «Putzer» – less important types of «Jass» («Schmauss», «domino», etc.). The choice of game depends on many factors: time available; talent of the partners at one's disposal; to drink without having to open one's purse; greed; simply enjoying a game. Anybody is a good «Jasser» from the outset, or can become one by making the necessary effort and undertaking the requisite studies. The characteristic qualities of a good player are the following: attention, remembering the cards already played, a little bit of daring, precaution, patience, finesse and intuition.

For many, bridge is too scientific; it demands too much knowledge and above all great calm. Things are quite different in «Jass»! What a wonderful treat! The pub-crawler, the sick and the retired wake up, get transformed. One laughs, one thumps the table, one predicts, one fights ... one forgets and one forgives. What wonderful diversion! «Jass» puts one in a good mood, in a cheerful frame of mind. Long live «Jass»!

Card Games

There are two centres in Switzerland where playing-cards are produced: at Neuhausen near Schaffhausen there is a genuine, world-renowned playing-card industry. Primarily bridge, «Jass», taroc and patience cards are manufactured there. At Renens, not far from Lausanne, the most important wholesaler of playing-cards in Switzerland has his home, and work is done by hand. The firm was founded 40 years ago by a precision tool maker and enjoys a world-wide reputation today. It supplies 80% of the Swiss market and in addition many collectors.