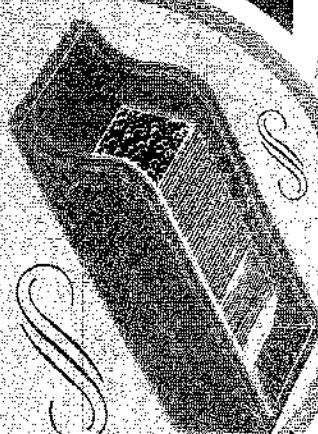


THE GAMBLER'S ROCK SHELF



# BACCARAT

## FAIR AND FINE

*Professor Hoffmann*

*To Buy*

AN 1891 GLASSIE ON  
EUROPEAN STYLE  
BACCARAT INN  
BANDOUIT &  
CHERMIN DIE FERR



Baccarat Fair & Fine

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# BACCARAT

## FAIR AND FOUL

*BEING AN EXPLANATION OF THE GAME, AND  
A WARNING AGAINST ITS DANGERS*

BY

PROFESSOR HOFFMANN

AUTHOR OF "MODERN MAGIC," "MORE MAGIC," ETC.

*"Eclaircissez les dupes, et il n'y aura plus de fripons."—MONTESQUIEU.*

LONDON

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## PREFACE

A good deal of public curiosity has been of late aroused respecting the game of Baccarat. The present work is designed, in the first place, to satisfy such curiosity by giving an explanation of the game and a statement of its laws. But it has also a second object. There is perhaps no game which so lends itself to the arts of the card-sharper as Baccarat, and if it be true that "in vain the net is spread in sight of any bird," an exposition of the frauds to which the honest player is liable should be the most effective warning against indulging in so perilous a pastime.

## BACCARAT — FAIR PLAY

Baccarat, or Baccara, the popular game of the day in circles where high play prevails, is of French origin, having come into vogue in the latter part of the reign of Louis-Phillippe. It has many points of resemblance to Vingt-un, but money changes hands at Baccarat more rapidly, and the element of chance is much more prominent. The stakes are made before any card is dealt, and one player plays for several. There is, therefore, save on the part of the banker, scarcely any scope for personal skill or judgment.

The object of the game is to hold such cards as shall together amount to the point of nine. The cards from ace to nine count each according to the number of its pips. Court cards are equivalent to tens, and ten at this game is baccarat, a synonym for zero. Thus a player holding a three and a ten (or court card) is considered to have three only; a player holding two tens and a five counts five only. And not only is a ten card baccarat (0), but ten occurring as part of a total score, however made, is disregarded; so that a five and a six count, not as eleven, but as one only; three, seven and five, not as fifteen, but as five; and so on.

There are two forms of Baccarat, known respectively as **Baccarat Chemin de Fer\*** and **Baccarat Banque\*\***, the latter being the version more frequently played. A description of Baccarat Chemin de Fer will, however, be the best introduction to the explanation of Baccarat Banque, and we, therefore, take it first in order.

\*This portion of the work is a reprint from "The Cyclopaedia of Card and Table Games," George Routledge & Sons, Limited.

\*\*In France they are frequently played alternately.

The above tables are drawn up with reference to one punter only. Where, as will frequently happen, the indications on the two sides are opposed to one another, the banker is recommended to disregard altogether that side on which the smaller amount is staked, and to be guided in his decision by the rules above suggested as applied to the more important hand. Assuming the soundness of the rule, it is obviously to the banker's advantage that the difference between the amounts should be as large as possible. He should not, therefore, as is frequently done, urge the punters to stake equally on both sides of the table, as he thereby destroys a material element in his own favour.

### FOUL PLAY: Frauds by the Banker Methods of Card-Sharping Employed at Baccarat

So far, we have dealt with Baccarat as it professes to be--a game of chance. But, as it is too frequently played, the element of chance is destroyed, and the game is made, by various nefarious expedients, a certainty for the dishonest player. Wherever there is high play, it may be taken as an axiom that the sharper will sooner or later find an entrance, even in circles where the high character of the players generally would seem to preclude the possibility of such an occurrence. Indeed, a house or club reputed thoroughly "safe" is the happy hunting-ground of the fashionable card-sharper. Having once gained a footing, he operates at his ease. The character of the habits being ostensibly above suspicion, he profits by the general good repute. He neither fears competition in his own line, nor the watchfulness of too-instructed eyes, and if he only does not raise suspicions by having too constant a run of luck he may gather a golden harvest at his leisure.

Fortunately, however, for the honest player, with whom "forewarned" may to some small extent be "fore-armed," the card-sharping fraternity have no longer an absolute monopoly of their disreputable secrets. On more than one occasion they have had, when they least suspected it, "a chiel among them takin' notes." Robert-Houdin, Alfred de Caston, and last, but not least, A. Cavaille, have each written more or less complete exposures of the tricks of the card-sharping craft; and we propose to give in the following pages, mainly founded on their "revelations," a short account of such tricks so far as they apply to the game of Baccarat.

Mons. Cavaille, in particular, had special opportunities of becoming acquainted with his subject, for he held for some years the post of principal inspector of that branch of the French detective service concerned with the suppression of clandestine gaming-houses. He made his work a labour of love, losing no opportunity of adding a new swindle to his note-book, and ultimately embodied the knowledge he had gained in a treatise of some three hundred and fifty closely-printed pages, under the title of *Les Filouteries du Jeu*. Some notion may be formed of the thoroughness with which his work was done when we mention that the fraudulent practices appropriate to Baccarat alone occupy over a hundred pages.

Another inference may be drawn from the fact just stated, viz., that Baccarat is a game which especially lends itself to the arts of the card-sharper, or the literature of its "seamy side" would not be so extensive. Such is, in fact, the case. The tricks of the Baccarat table are legion; their number and ingenuity being such that, but for their disreputable object, they might almost claim the dignity of a science.

It is obvious that the artifices used must necessarily be different, according as the dishonest player is for

## Marked Cards

These may be divided into two categories, the first comprising such as are deliberately marked beforehand, or so manufactured as to be distinguishable by their backs to an instructed eye; the second, such as are marked off-hand by the sharper in course of play.

With regard to such as are marked beforehand, the distinguishing mark usually takes the shape of a minute dot or dots, scarcely discoverable at all by an uninitiated person, even upon close examination, but plain enough to the eagle eye of the sharper. The position of the dot reveals the nature of the card. We cannot give a better illustration of the working of this particular fraud than by quoting Robert-Houdin's observations on this subject.\*

"The trick I am about to describe is equal to any of the most refined abbreviations used in shorthand, for, by the aid of a single spot, any one of the thirty-two cards of a piquet pack can at once be recognized.

"we will imagine, for example, a design formed of round spots, or devices of any other shape, arranged symmetrically as patterns of this sort usually are. For instance, as in the annexed diagram (Fig. 1, pg. 47).

"The first large spot, beginning from the top of the card, on the left, may represent hearts; the second, going downwards, diamonds; the third, clubs, and the fourth, spades .

"Now, if by the side of these, which are ready to hand as part of the design, another smaller spot is added, it will immediately indicate what the card is.

\*"Card-Sharper Exposed," by Robert-Houdin. Translated by Professor Hoffman: George Routledge and Sons, Limited. A very exhaustive work, not throwing much direct light on the frauds appropriate to Baccarat (which was little played in Robert-Houdin's day), but containing a host of interesting revelations on the subject of card-sharper generally.

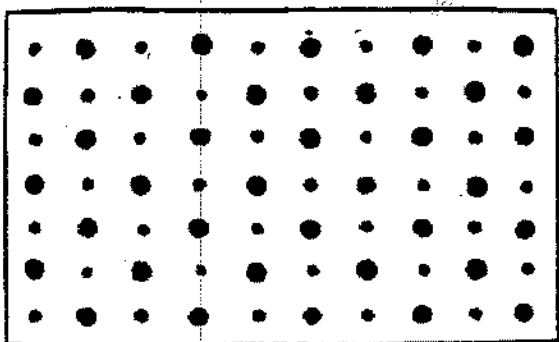


Fig. 1

The mark will be placed in one or other of the positions shown in Fig. 2. Placed at the top, it will



Fig. 2

indicate that the card is an ace; one point further to the right, a king; the third spot will represent a queen, the fourth a knave, and so on round the circle to the seven. (It must be clearly understood that only one mark is actually used, as in Fig. 1, where that which is annexed to the third spot of the pattern would, according to the rules laid down above, indicate the eight of clubs.)"

Robert-Houdin proceeds to relate an incident in his own experience. In the year 1849 he was asked by the Public Prosecutor attached to the Criminal Court of the Seine, to examine a number of packs of cards found in the possession of a suspected card-sharper. The backs were of plain white. Not the smallest mark was visible on any of them, and Robert-Houdin, after a fortnight's perseverance, was

about to give up the task in despair. We will give the rest of the story in his own words.

"No, there certainly is nothing wrong about these cards!" I exclaimed, throwing the pack I was examining in disgust across the table. All at once, on the shining back of one of the cards, near one of the corners, I thought I saw a dull spot, which had before escaped me. On looking close at it, it disappeared; but, strange to say, as I drew further away it reappeared. 'Luck at last!' I exclaimed, enthusiastically. 'The cards are marked, after all'; and bringing to bear my knowledge of card-sharpping principles, I satisfied myself that on every card there was a similar spot, which, from its position, distinguished the suit and value of the card. The system was as follows:

"We must suppose the upper part of each card divided into eight imaginary divisions perpendicularly, and four horizontally, as in Fig. 3. The former will represent the value of the card, the latter its suit. The mark is placed where the two divisions intersect one another.

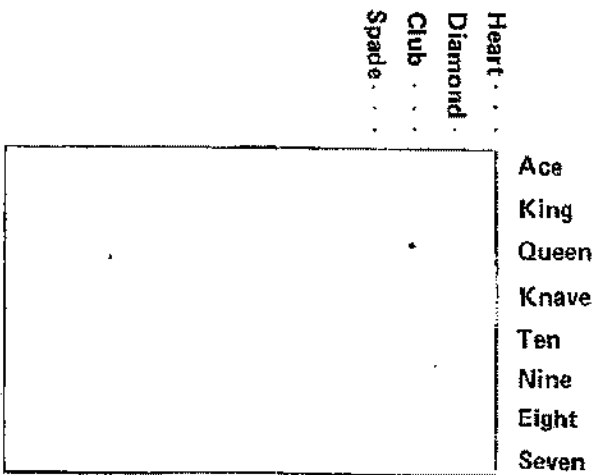


Fig. 3

At first sight is may seem a very difficult task to decide to which divisions an isolated spot on the back of a card belongs. But if the reader will consider the matter attentively, he will see that the spot given by way of illustration in Fig. 3 cannot possibly belong either to the second or the fourth perpendicular division; and, proceeding in the same manner, it will be found that the spot is in the second horizontal division, and represents, therefore, the queen of clubs.

For the purpose of cheating at Baccarat, a different system of marking is necessary. Here the fifty-two card pack is used, but the distinctions of suit is immaterial, and tens and court cards are of equal value. The sharper, therefore, only requires to be able to distinguish aces, twos, threes, fours, fives, sixes, sevens, eights and nines. Cavaille gives an example of one system used for this purpose. It is as under:

- An ace bears a mark in the center.
- A two bears a mark in the middle of each pip.
- A three bears a mark in the middle of each pip.
- A four bears a mark in each of two opposite corners diagonally.
- A five bears a mark in each of the corners of one end.
- A six bears a mark in the middle of each of the two central pips.
- A seven bears a mark on the single pip in centre and one adjoining.
- An eight bears a mark on the three pips at one side.
- A nine bears a mark on the centre pip and the two nearest to it.

The remaining cards (i.e., the tens and court cards) are sufficiently distinguished by the absence of any mark.

For fancy-backed cards another system is employed. We will suppose that the pattern consists of a flower or other figure, three or more times repeated in the width of the card. Commencing from the left, a dot in the neighborhood of the first flower may indicate ace, two or three, according as it is placed above or to the right or left respectively of that particular flower. A dot placed close to the second flower may,

according to its position, in like manner indicate a four, five, or six; and a dot near the third flower a seven, eight, or nine. The same mark is repeated at the opposite end. The tenth cards are, as before, left unmarked.

The above are, however, mere illustrations, the sharper of the higher classes preferring to mark his cards according to a system of his own, so that it may be intelligible to himself only.

As to the manner in which the mark is produced, Robert-Houdin preserved a discreet silence, but there are in truth so many ways of effecting the desired object that it is hardly worth while to imitate his reticence. It is probable that in the case he mentions the dull point on a bright surface was produced by no more elaborate device than letting fall on the card a minute drop of water, dried up with blotting paper so soon as it had served its purpose of removing the glaze from that particular spot.

Sometimes the mark takes the opposite shape, viz., consists of a bright spot on a matt surface. In this case it may be produced either by friction with an agate burnisher, or by taking up with a needle point a drop of sugared water, and letting it dry on the desired position on the back of the card, the crystallization of the sugar producing the desired lustre.

The methods of producing the mark above described are appropriate more particularly to plain-backed cards. With cards of a fancy pattern the Greek is less particular. In this case the mark is usually made with ink, usually of the same colour as that of the design of the card, so that the mark, even if noticed, would be taken to be a mere defect in the printing. Indeed, so far has the enterprise of the swindling craft extended, that it is possible to procure cards so printed that the design itself, by means of varia-

tions so minute as to be absolutely undiscoverable without a knowledge of the secret, indicates the nature of the card to the better instructed sharper.

In some cases the pattern may even be identical throughout the pack, but a slight difference of margin, varying with different cards, affords all needful information.

Sometimes the mark is so arranged as to be distinguishable by feel instead of by sight. In this case it is made with a needle-point, pressed nearly or quite through the substance of the card from the face outwards. Cards so marked are "read" by the ball of the thumb, the sensibility of which, naturally very great, is heightened by the use of pumice-stone, or other artificial means.

There are so many other methods of marking cards so as to be distinguishable by their backs, but nothing would be gained, so far as the honest player is concerned, by going more minutely into this branch of the subject, for it may be taken for granted that, whatever the system, it would be absolutely undiscoverable by any ordinary spectator, even with a theoretical knowledge of the method adopted.

Cards thus elaborately marked are not designed for mere casual use, but for introduction, either by the connivance of the proprietor, or of his underlings, into some establishment where high play is carried on.

We proceed to discuss card marking, of what may be called the rough-and-ready kind, as used extempore in course of play.

Here the favourite expedient is that of marking the cards in the corner with the thumb-nail, which is so shaped in cutting as to facilitate the operation. The card is simply nipped at the right spot, between the thumb and forefinger, and a minute depression,



appearing on the opposite side as a projection, is produced on its face. The mark is too small to be noticeable by any but instructed eyes, but whenever that card re-appears on the top of the pack, the sharper knows exactly what it is, and governs his play accordingly. As the Greek takes the opportunity to mark every card (other than tenth cards) which comes into his hands, he will before the close of a long sitting be able to recognize a large proportion of those in use, and where, as may sometimes happen, two or three sharpers are working in concert, the process is still more rapid.\* Others again mark the card with the thumb or finger-nail, but in a different manner, the pressure being exercised across the edge of the card so as to produce a minute notch, the position of such notch indicating the value of the card.

Yet another section mark a card by turning up or down one or more of its corners, the shape and size of the triangle thus made affording the desired indication.\*\*

\* Apropos of the familiar "three card" trick, Cavaille tells a good story of a sharper of the higher class, who made a speciality of this "thumb-nail" marking. Strolling through a fair in the neighbourhood of Paris, he came across a three-card man plying his vocation, and stopped, with an amused smile to watch him. He was solicited to try his luck, and, after a little persuasion, staked a five-franc piece. "This is the queen," he said, taking up a card haphazard. It proved to be the seven of spades. "Then where on earth is the queen of clubs?" he inquired, innocently. "I believe you have smuggled it away." "No, I haven't!" replied the street artist. "Here it is." The supposed pigeon took up the card, looked at it as if in wonderment, and threw it down again. Meanwhile, however, the skillful thumb-nail had done its work, and the card was thenceforth as recognizable to the sharper as if it had lain face upwards. The unfortunate three-card man tried all he knew. He shifted the cards this way and that way, turned corners up and corners down, but all to no purpose. The mysterious unknown "spotted" the card each time with unerring accuracy, and in a very short time had "broken the bank." The three-card man began to pack up his traps to depart, when his more aristocratic confederate relieved his mind by returning the money he had lost, with a friendly caution to be more wide awake for the future.

\*\* Robert-Houdin mentions, among the various appliances for card marking, a specially made finger-ring, known as a trepan. It is hollow, and filled with very liquid ink. Projecting from the circumference, within the hand, is a little point, with an aperture so minute that the liquid does not escape from it, though remaining constantly at its mouth. This ring constitutes a sort of reservoir pen, with which the Greek can mark any card with an almost imperceptible spot at pleasure. Appliances of this nature are, however, eschewed by cautious operators as forming too conclusive evidence in the event of detection. The Greek of the highest class uses no extraneous aid, but trust solely to his own brains and his own fingers.

The object of thus marking the cards is, primarily, to indicate whether it is desirable to draw or not to draw the card for the time being exposed on the top of the pack. The marks may be utilized for this purpose both by banker and punters, if only the latter are near enough to distinguish it. In the case of the banker, however, it leads up to another form of fraud, involving the use of

### Sleight of Hand

The opportunities for the use of sleight of hand at Baccarat are limited, for the very moderate amount of address needed for the application of a portee scarcely deserves that name. There is, however, an expedient familiar to conjurers as "changing a card," (a filage), which, with a little modification, is extensively used by the cardsharper fraternity under the name of "second-dealing." The result of the sleight is that the dealer, while apparently giving the top card in the usual way, actually gives the second card instead of it. This is effected as follows: The sharper, in dealing, pushes forward the two top cards. The first and second finger and thumb of the right hand close upon them. Then begins a very delicate operation. The thumb pushes back the top card, while the fingers draw forward the second card. So soon as the latter is clear, the thumb and fingers clip this only, and draw it out, the top card being meanwhile drawn back, by the left thumb, to its original position on the pack.

The sleight, in its perfect shape, is a difficult one, and requires much cultivation. Cavaille was told by an exceptionally clever sharper that he had practiced it in front of a mirror for two years before he ventured to make practical use of it. But, once acquired, the illusion is complete. The keenest eye cannot detect the fraud. Robert-Houdin, in the course of his investigations of cards, met with an operator who, to illustrate his skill in this particular trick,

the opposite side of the table, and, leaning over, places a note of that amount on the top of the cards. "Very good," says the banker. He removes the note, and begins to deal, little thinking that under that innocent-looking piece of paper was a portee, which now rests on the top of the pack, and will do prompt execution on the funds of his bank.

### Marked Cards

These, again, are frequently employed against the banker. The marking is, in this case, very simple, for only the eights and nines are marked, and the same mark will do for either.\*

The sharper having succeeded, either by means of a substitution, or by contrivance of the proprietor of the house, in procuring the use of cards thus marked, places himself immediately at the right of the banker. He watches carefully the top card, which, in the natural course, will be dealt on his side. If it is an eight or nine, he stakes heavily, knowing that, from the large proportion of tenth cards in the pack, he is extremely likely to make "eight" or "nine." Even should the second not be a tenth card, the chances of a good point are still in his favour.

### Sleight of Hand

Sleight of hand, again, is employed against the banker in many ways. Thus the fraudulent punter will get possession of a nine (sometimes even bringing a supply in his pockets), and hold it palmed in his hand. Should one or other of the cards dealt to him chance to be a ten, or court card, he substitutes the concealed nine for the other card, and turns up a "natural." The surplus card is either retained in the hand, or let fall on to the knees. Sometimes the sleeve affords the needful hiding-place.

\*Where the lower cards are also marked, as described at pg. 49, the marking, though primarily intended for the benefit of the fraudulent banker, may also be used against his more honest successor, the mark being a guide to the punters in his immediate neighbourhood, whether to draw or not to draw a card.

In some cases the sharper does not content himself by exchanging one card only, but has the complete "natural" in readiness, and substitutes it for the cards dealt to him while the attention of the dealer is otherwise occupied.

In default of the needful address for such a substitution as above described, the sharper now and then extracts an undue payment from the banker by sheer force of impudence. He chances, we will say, to have received a nine and an eight, making his point seven, a very good point, but the banker chances to have the same, and hes neither pay nor receive. The sharper says boldly, "I have eight," showing his cards with the eight so placed over the nine that only the three pips of the latter card are visible, under which circumstances it cannot be distinguished from a ten. Having thus shown his cards for a moment, he promptly throws them into the waste basket, and the banker, unless on the alert against such a fraud, pays up accordingly.

### Secret Telegraphy

There is not much scope for telegraphic signals on the part of the punters, save in cases where the cards are marked (see page 49), when the sharper, seated to right or left of the banker, telegraphs to his associates at a distance the nature of the top card for the time being, and they stake, draw, or refrain from drawing accordingly.

### Adding to or Decreasing the Stake after the Event

This is a frequent form of fraud at Baccarat, though by no means peculiar to that game. It will be remembered that the stakes are here made before any card is dealt. When the player receives a winning point, he naturally wishes that he had staked higher. When on the contrary, he receives a bad hand, he