

Victor Mollo

# BRIDGE

## In The Menagerie



A classic that should be on the shelf of any bridge enthusiast.

Victor Mollo

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## In The Menagerie



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# Publisher's Foreword

Back in the 1980s, while working for Macmillan Publishing, I attended a sales meeting at which a newly discovered, and therefore previously unpublished, work by Ernest Hemingway was announced. Later that evening, I was chatting to the editor who had had the good fortune to work on this manuscript, and couldn't resist asking him what the experience had been like.

'Well,' he replied, 'he wasn't a bad writer, you know.'

It has been my good fortune to undertake the bridge equivalent of his experience — to work on editing and publishing a new edition of Victor Mollo's *Bridge in the Menagerie*, a book that is included in absolutely everybody's list of the top ten books ever written on the game of bridge.

Even though, almost fifty years after it first appeared, some of the expressions feel a little dated, or perhaps a bit too British, we decided quite quickly that, apart from spelling and house style in the presentation of the deals and auctions, we would not touch the basic text. Rather, we would add a small number of

footnotes, to explain any references that might mystify a modern reader. Far be it from me to attempt to improve on a masterpiece.

When we published *The Hog Takes to Precision* in 2011, we were surprised to hear from many people who had enjoyed the book, but had never had the chance to read this current volume, the first one in the iconic Menagerie series. It is therefore with a sense of pride, and a certain amount of humility, that we make this edition available, enhanced by Bill Buttle's wonderful illustrations.

Perhaps we can introduce Victor Mollo's characters, wit and brilliant deals to a whole new generation. After all, he wasn't a bad writer.

*Ray Lee, Master Point Press  
March, 2013*

# Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	7
LET'S JOIN THE GRIFFINS	9
1. TABLE UP	11
2. ENTER THE HIDEOUS HOG	21
3. THE HOG UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT	31
4. CONFESSIONS OF A HOG	39
5. THE HOG TAKES TO DUPLICATE	51
6. HOG VERSUS RABBIT: A DUEL AT DUPLICATE	63
7. LEPRECHAUNS VERSUS GREMLINS	73
8. LEPRECHAUNS VERSUS GREMLINS (II)	83
9. KIBITZERS TAKE ARMS	93
10. COUPS BY KIBITZERS	105
11. THE HOG IN THE FOURTH DIMENSION	119
12. THE HOG AND THE RABBIT PLAY SET	131
13. THE RABBIT PUNCH	141
14. THE VANISHING TRICK	157



# Acknowledgments

As on previous occasions, my three principal accomplices have been Ewart Kempson, Nico Gardener and my wife, the Squirrel. They share the blame equally, but Ewart Kempson's share is the most equal of the three. All the material in this book has appeared in *Bridge Magazine*. As its editor, Ewart Kempson could have surely done something to stop me. Believe me, he did not lift a finger. In fact, when no one was looking, he aided and abetted me, and surreptitiously he condoned my worst excesses.

Nico Gardener, Director of the London School of Bridge, is the inexorable master of technique. During the years of our association I recorded and constructed some three thousand hands and I submitted at least five thousand of them to Nico Gardener. He X-rayed them all before withholding his malediction. Then, prior to giving me his blessing, he vivisected the lot once more. So if you spot any technical flaws, do not hesitate to blame Nico. After all, someone must be responsible and who else is there to blame?

You may find it irksome to come across so many hands with exactly the same number of cards, always thirteen, never more, never less. This repetitive pattern is no coincidence. The guilty party is my wife, who probably cannot play bridge at all. She does not know for she has never tried. But she simply dotes and drools over those tiresome little x's, which a man of broad vision is apt, at times, to overlook.

The Squirrel wears the pencil, wields the scissors and reads the proofs with a rod of iron. Since it is no good arguing with the

weaker sex, I give in gracefully. But should you happen to catch her out, please let me know.

Finally I come to the Griffins themselves. For many years they have been searching for an author to do justice to their faults and foibles, their engaging vices and comic virtues. If they have picked the wrong man, the blame is theirs, not mine. I have weighed all the facts carefully and I acquit myself unanimously.

V.M.

# Let's Join the Griffins

There is too much stress everywhere on the art of winning and not nearly enough anywhere on the art of losing. Yet it is surely the more important of the two, for not only do the losers pay the winners, but they clearly enjoy doing it. Were it otherwise they would have stopped playing — or taken to winning — long ago.

Success at bridge, in fact, depends less on winning than on extracting the last ounce of pleasure from losing. And that is one of the reasons for the superiority of the Griffins over other clubs. Nowhere else will you find such keen, contented losers, who can savor to the full every luscious blow that fate or partner can inflict. Yes, it's positively a pleasure to win from them.

The Griffins Club has many other titles to fame. We play quickly, for we feel that it is more dignified to make mistakes through lack of forethought than after mature deliberation. Our standard of kibitzing is unusually high. Never have we subscribed to the view that kibitzers should be seen and not heard. Why should they be seen?

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

H.H.

The Hideous Hog

*‘Please, please partner, let me play the hand. I assure you that it’s in your own interest’*

R.R.

The Rueful Rabbit

*‘One gets used to abuse. It’s waiting for it that is so trying.’*

PAPA

Themistocles Papadopoulos

*‘The essence of bridge is to see through the backs of the cards.’*

KARAPET

A Free Armenian

*‘Again everything has happened to me.’*

OSCAR THE OWL

Senior kibitzer at the Griffins

*‘Curious hand. Both sides can make four hearts.’*

PEREGRINE THE PENGUIN

Senior kibitzer at the Unicorn

*‘A technician is a man who knows exactly what to do the moment he has done something else.’*

THE LEPRECHAUN

*‘We have the greatest faith in luck. We’ve cultivated the habit for years’*

THE GREMLIN

*‘Who says that crime does not pay?’*

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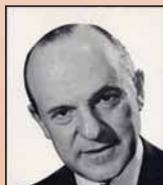
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## 'Curious hand. Both sides can make Four Hearts!'

Victor Mollo's *Bridge in the Menagerie* is on any list of the all-time top ten books on the game. The stories it contains, originally published in *Bridge Magazine* in the UK, found a world-wide audience in book form when they first appeared in 1965. Everyone can relate to the characters (the Hideous Hog, the Rueful Rabbit, Oscar the Owl, and the rest), the bridge hands are brilliant, and the stories themselves hilarious. This is the book against which all subsequent attempts at bridge humor are measured.

The illustrations in this new edition of *Bridge in the Menagerie* are by bridge cartoonist Bill Buttle.



**VICTOR MOLLO** (1909-1987) was one of the best-loved authors ever to write about bridge. He wrote many excellent how-to books on the game (including the classic *Card Play Technique*, with Nico Gardener) but it is as a humorist, and the author of *Bridge in the Menagerie* and its sequels, that he is best remembered.



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