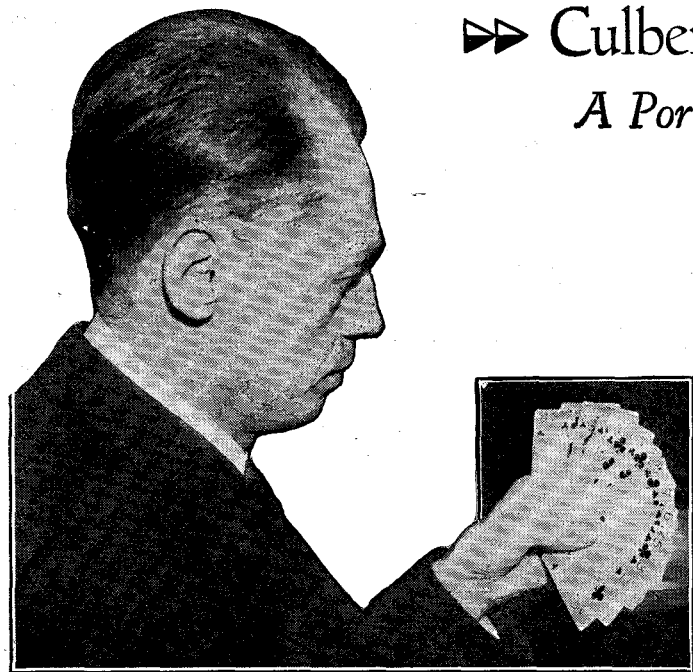


## ⇒ Culbertson: Soldier of Fortune ◀◀

### *A Portrait of the Magnate of Bridge*

By ANDREW A. FREEMAN



Keystone

*He carried revolutionary ideas into the world of bridge*

**T**O HUNDREDS of thousand women bridge players he is a greater figure than Albert Einstein, Babe Ruth or Bobby Jones. To most of their husbands he is the Barnum of the card world.

Not only is Culbertson a profound student of cards and an innovator, but he is also an organizer who has made bridge instruction a big business bringing him a fortune. If we are to accept his word, bridge has emerged from the morass of economic depression as one business which continues to show increasing profits. At least so the books of Culbertson show.

Probably that is why aristocratic necks stiffen when Culbertson enters the sacrosanct portals of the Whist or the Knickerbocker Whist Clubs. Here on the Olympus where the gods of contract dwell, Culbertson's claim to the discovery of the forcing system in bidding, the latest convention at bridge tables from Sauk Centre to Park Avenue, is vigorously disputed. It was predicted that the recent organization of bridge headquarters by Work, Lenz and other experts to sponsor the so-called official system of bidding, might have the effect of checking the vogue of Culbertson's methods, and yet it is doubtful whether even so formidable a consolidation of bridge minds can shake the pedestal on which this suave master now stands. How can they expect to compete with a man who calls his wife the only partner he cares to play with and who has the perspicacity to make public his sincere belief that women are better bridge players than men. That statement was broadcast by a press which thrives on the sure-fire circulation value of con-

of the world's best players. He captained the winning 1930 Vanderbilt Cup team, and the group which defeated the British last year. On the jacket of his "Contract Bridge Blue Book," which he publishes himself, he says he is "Today's American and International Champion Bridge Player and World's Greatest Card Authority." Yet the gods of the bridge world criticized his victory of the Vanderbilt Cup. George Reith, manager of the Knickerbocker Whist Club, posted a notice on the bulletin board to the effect that Culbertson won the trophy after being warned by the cup committee. He said that Culbertson and his partner withheld their score card until that of the other members of his team of four was ready to be turned in. Culbertson denied the charge in his *Bridge World Magazine*, saying: "Mr. George Reith prevaricates deliberately and not in blissful ignorance."

Mr. Reith took the liberty to point out in reply that no national tournament committee has been called in session during the last two years to consider a protest unless Culbertson appeared either as plaintiff or defendant.

When Culbertson announced his team consisting of Baron Waldemar von Zedwitz, Theodore A. Lightner, Mrs. Culbertson and himself to represent the United States against Great Britain, the American Bridge League accused him of organizing the contest as "a personal promotion of Ely Culbertson." Culbertson replied that his team was unquestionably one of the three best in the United States.

Had it not been for his wife, Culbertson might have been a professor in the

controversy involving the sexes. To say that it helped promote sales of everything that Culbertson sells in connection with bridge, including lessons, books, syndicated articles, lectures, tables, lamps, pencils, cards, etc., is putting it mildly.

Aside from the business aspect of the game, he is one

social sciences instead of a leader in the bridge world. Although his income today ranks with those of captains of industry, he prefers to style himself an intellectual monarchist. Yet Culbertson has been a social revolutionist and even at one time believed in the academic principles of anarchy. Although it is now more than ten years since he was active in the cause of bringing about a political brotherhood of man, many of his former associates, now termed Reds, say that the world of social revolutions lost a good man when Ely Culbertson turned to bridge.

There was no good reason for Culbertson to be a radical. He inherited a Slavic intellectual alertness from his mother who was the daughter of an *ataman* (Russian Cossack chieftain). The ability to apply his mental faculties to material things he got from his father, A. E. Culbertson, as well as a membership in the Sons of the American Revolution. The elder Culbertson was a geologist of Scotch Covenanter descent who left his home in Oil City, Pa., to help develop the oil fields of the Russian Caucasus.

**D**ESPITE his ancestry and luxuries which gushing petroleum bore in its wake, Ely became a revolutionist at the age of 13. At the gymnasium in Vladikavkaz, about 100 miles from his home in the Grozni oil fields, he was regarded as something of a prodigy. His favorite authors were Schopenhauer, Artzibashev, Tolstoi and he would sit far into the night discussing their philosophy with his schoolmates over innumerable glasses of tea. The forerunner of the Bolshevik revolution in 1905 captured young Culbertson's imagination and he became active in organizing a secret revolutionary committee among the students. Although he spoke no English he was known as the *Amerikanitz*. He had an American passport and used it once on a trip to Switzerland to smuggle to his classmates copies of *Iskra* (The Spark), the official Russian revolutionary organ among the editors of which was Lenin.

During an uprising on the Black Sea coast, Ely was arrested in Sochi near Batum, where he had gone as a delegate of his school committee to aid the revolutionists. He had forgotten to carry his passport and the police refused to believe he was an American. His cell mates were

five men condemned to death for their part in the outbreak against the Czar. For two months he remained in prison, passing the time playing chess and reading Upton Sinclair's "The Jungle." When he was shipped home he became inflamed with the idea that inequality was the basis of all human suffering and that he must do his share to right the wrong.

He did not get an opportunity until several months after he arrived in America. He had completed his course in the gymnasium and traveled through Europe trying to decide which university he should enter to study sociology. When he found he could not pass an exam in Freshman English at Yale, he hired a tutor with the allowance of \$300 a month he got from his father and settled down to master his seventh language. The more he learned of English the more he was convinced that Yale had little to offer him. Compared with his classmates at the gymnasium in the Caucasus, the Yale student lived an emotional life of a 10-year-old, with a critical faculty wholly undeveloped.

When he had acquired a fair knowledge of English he set out for Montreal. There he got himself a job as timekeeper with a gang of Galician and Ukrainian laborers on their way to the Canadian Rockies to complete the railway to Prince Rupert. They received a wage of \$3 a day, but the laborers complained that all of this was taken back by unreasonably high prices in the railroad contractors' commissary stores. Through his ability to speak the language of the laborers, Culbertson helped to organize a strike. The walk-out took place two weeks before freezing, a time most valuable in construction work, because no dynamiting could be done when the temperature was low. In two days the strike was settled, and by the terms of the settlement Culbertson was to leave camp, 200 miles from Edmonton, Alberta, and he had to walk. Workers who had heard of the strike at Yellow Head smuggled food to him at night, when he failed to get it from the despised commissaries. On his arrival at Edmonton, he was arrested by the Northwest Mounted Police and jailed for a day as a dangerous radical.

He was without a penny. Months of allowances were waiting for him in San Francisco and the only way to get there was to "ride the rods." He suffered hunger, aching muscles and other discomforts which attend this mode of travel, until he was initiated into hobo circles. There he learned how to "bum" meals and he improved on the technique by appearing at backdoors with the man-



International

THE VANDERBILT CUP  
Won by Culbertson's team

ners of a Louis XV. Most of his associates among the knights of the road were members of the I. W. W., soldiers of fortune fighting under the banner of social revolt wherever they found it. Criminals were barred and the man who could not discuss the Marxian theory was ostracized.

He ate three meals a day until he arrived in Medford, Oregon, near the California border, the toughest town for hobos from Alaska to Lower California. When courtly manners failed to get him a meal, Culbertson took a job as a dishwasher in a "hash joint" near the railroad station. After four hours of work he collapsed and was taken to a hospital suffering from double pneumonia brought on by many days of exposure and lack of food. When he was discharged as cured, the desire for a cigarette led him to a hobo camp at the edge of the town. The man from whom he bummed a match took offense at his request and a free-for-all fight started. Within half an hour all the combatants were arrested. Culbertson fainted when thrust into a cell. He awoke in a hospital two days later, suffering from a relapse.

After five months of gentlemanly leisure in San Francisco where he continued his studies in international law and philosophy, the lure of the road and of revolution carried him off again, this time to join the Zapata forces in Mexico. He was now 20 years old. When he got into the field of action he found that fighting for the rights of the under dog was losing its fascination. The task appeared pointless and hopeless. As a result, he withdrew and spent a year in study and loafing at Mazatlan on the Pacific coast of Mexico.

It was here that the reaction against his career as a revolutionist took form. He was making a study of the philosophy of Max Stirner and the latter's "The Ego and His Own" had a shattering effect upon his life. There followed alternate mental sieges of the philosophy of egoism and that of altruism. Eventually egoism won. He acquired a new *Welt Anschlag*. Revolutionists appeared to him as leaders of slaves sacrificing themselves for an ideal that could never be. The world, he was convinced, must always have its inequalities. There must always be slaves and there must be masters. He was through with it all. From now on he was out for himself. But it was not easy to quit the revolutionary life. When the uprising under Felix Diaz occurred in Vera Cruz he joined the insurrectionists. He remained in Vera Cruz for a fortnight and left for Spain in disgust.

In Madrid former anarchist companions took him in tow against his will and made him a member of *Circle del Atheno*, the political and literary club out of which grew the last revolution in Spain. Culbertson has the police of Madrid to thank for helping him to rid himself forever of his radical associates. In the latter part of 1912, a Russian anarchist hurled a bomb at King Alfonso. In the police raids which followed, Culbertson was taken for a Russian and escorted by two gendarmes to the French border.

With all thoughts of socialism and anarchism behind him, he entered *L'Ecole Supérieure des Sciences Economique et Politique* in Paris in 1913, to prepare for an LL.D. degree. The first six months of the war found Culbertson immersed in research work in Berlin and Geneva. When the first American troops arrived in France he presented himself for an examination as interpreter. He passed brilliantly in six languages but flunked in English. He continued his work in French Red Cross units until the war was over.

MEANWHILE, the revolution in which he so ardently took part a few years before engulfed Russia and wiped out his family's fortune. He was left with an apartment in Paris and a claim of \$3,000,000 against the Bolsheviks for confiscating his father's oil property. He subsisted by renting his apartment to Americans, but finally that source of income dwindled. In an effort to regain his family's property, he joined the Russian monarchists in Paris in their plans to raise an army to defeat the Bolsheviks. He worked in coöperation with



General Gourko, former commander of the northern front of the Russian armies. Their aim was to collect money from French and English capitalists in return for which they promised concessions in Russia. The plan did not materialize.

He turned to cards as a release. At the *Cafe de la Couronne* in Geneva he not only had the reputation of being a poor player but a stubborn one as well. The reason for every move interested him more than winning and eventually he could find no one to deal him a hand. As a result he turned to the scientific aspect of cards and discovered that "the divine spark of intelligence shines in the subtle architectural structure of a well-conceived no-trump bid or a defensive play as in the building of a gothic cathedral."

Theories, however, won no games for him. His source of income became more hazardous. One evening in Paris when he was trying to convince himself to go to work, he dropped into a club in *Rue Volnay*. He had 100 francs in his pocket. A game of ecarté was in progress and Culbertson placed a 20-franc chip on the table. As his card was drawn the player next to him stepped on his toe. Culbertson demanded an apology which was refused and a fight started. When he returned to the gaming table after an absence of about forty-five minutes, he heard the croupier say: "This sum can go no further. Whose is it?" Culbertson stepped up and received 20,480 francs. His 20-franc note had won and doubled ten times. And so he came to New York for a job.

It was Josephine Dillon whom he married shortly after he arrived here who



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His wife lured him into the business of bridge—and he calls her one of the best partners in the world

won him over to bridge. She already had a prominent place as a teacher and a player in the women's auxiliary of auction bridge. She convinced him that bridge not only would give him an opportunity to apply his knowledge of sociology and philosophy but would also make him a comfortable living.

When he was first introduced to the bridge clubs of New York he had already developed an unerring ability to win. He made himself unpopular by telling those who guided the destinies of bridge that something was wrong with their systems of play. His criticisms did not spring from jealous motives or from any desire to insinuate that the current masters did not know the game. He was still a revolutionist in spite of himself. He wanted to improve the game and to show the experts what he had discovered.

He kept a daily account of his own errors in bidding and in play. These he classified as underbid, overbid, bad lead, psychological inadaptation of partner's mental level, etc. At the end of the month he made a statistical chart which showed the peaks and values of the state of his game. Thus when he played, his opponents faced a machine.

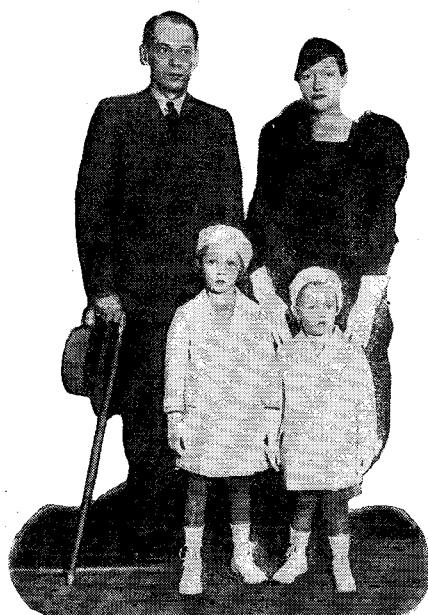
Out of his intensive researches came his applied system of bidding in auction and finally the now famous forcing system in contract. While his claim to the exclusive discovery of these two methods is disputed, no one can deny that it was Culbertson who not only made the bridge playing world conscious of the forcing system but taught thousands to use it.

Today Culbertson is a nationally publicized product. The backbone of his business is composed of over 1,000 teachers, all having diplomas qualifying them to teach the Culbertson method. They distribute his products and come to his conventions once a year, a privilege for which each pays a fee of \$60. He owns and edits *Bridge World* magazine. Although ostensibly devoted to the interests of bridge, cynics say that it is dedicated to the glory of Ely Culbertson. In a recent issue of forty-eight pages, Culbertson's name appeared 164 times. When he completed his "Contract Bridge Blue Book," his business acumen led him to organize his own publishing company. "Why should I take small royalties from a publisher when I can pay a man a small royalty to publish the book?" he asked. That volume and a summary of it are on best-seller lists.

Culbertson is 39 years old. He speaks perfect English but still retains a strong Russian accent. His tall, thin frame is always immaculately clothed. He entertains lavishly and the guests with whom he plays bridge in the evening are the very cream of celebrities. His hobbies are his two children, Joyce and Ely ("Jump Bid"), whose education he is personally supervising. He wants them to be revolutionists but not in the political sense. He spends his spare time reading in international politics and philosophy. He never plays golf, he says, because it is dangerous to the mind.

He never walks. If he has to go

(Continued on Page 480)



International

**THE CULBERTSON FAMILY**  
The education of the children is as closely directed by Culbertson as he directs his own bridge game

## ▶▶ Throwing Mud at the White House ◀◀

FOR the past six weeks a curious book, *The Strange Career of Mr. Hoover Under Two Flags*, has been resting on the desk of nearly every important editor in the United States. It was chastely bound, although crudely printed, and it brought back memories of those other extraordinary studies, *The President's Daughter* and *The Strange Death of President Harding*. Apparently the editors of the country were repelled by the first few pages of the latest onslaught and they tossed the volume aside. Only two reviews have appeared, in the San Francisco *Argonaut* and the Hartford, Connecticut, *Times*. This was in line with the treatment accorded to the attacks on President Harding, both of which became best sellers despite the blanket of editorial silence. *The Strange Career of Mr. Hoover*, being badly written and dull in the extreme, will probably not achieve so great a success. But it has already appeared on the best seller lists in Washington, D. C., and St. Louis.

An aura of mystery surrounded the Hoover book. The publisher, William Faro, Inc., was obscure. The author, one John Hamill, seemed to be innocent of previous literary efforts. In various parts of the country booksellers had declined to handle it; elsewhere they shrugged their shoulders and put a copy or two in their windows. The Democratic National Committee at Washington ignored rumors, which were wholly without foundation, that *The Strange Career of Mr. Hoover* had

been financed by those who seek his defeat in 1932. William Faro, Inc., in an explanatory preface, insists that "we have documentary proof for every syllable of this extraordinary work." Publication was undertaken, this preface contends, with a sense of public duty. "Some of the biggest American publishers turned this book down," but William Faro, Inc., do not flinch from danger.

"... We are still old-fashioned enough to believe that nothing is more powerful

By HENRY F. PRINGLE

than truth; nothing so potent as fact," the publisher insists. "And so we submit the facts, amazing as they are."

The "facts" are certainly amazing in their presentation of Herbert Hoover as a crafty mining promoter of great skill and small honor. The proof, documentary or otherwise, is not discernible in the volume itself. It is, of course, a wholly libelous book and the President, if he were willing to dignify this attack, could avail himself of both the civil and criminal law. Even more interesting, however, is the story behind the book itself. The strange career of William Faro is at least as strange as the version of Mr. Hoover's life which is set forth.

The headquarters of William Faro, Inc., are, at the moment, in a penthouse on Broadway in the vicinity of Twenty-sixth street, New York. This might be the office of any small publisher; every year some young man, whose father has made a moderate fortune in a less intellectual trade, opens an office and hopefully waits for an author who has had his book rejected by established houses. To a visitor promising publicity for *The Strange Career of Mr. Hoover*, the head of William Faro, Inc., was immediately available. Faro consented readily to produce the author, John Hamill. He

said that his office and his records were open to examination by any one with a legitimate interest. Only the previous week two men who said they were from the Internal Revenue Bureau had inspected his ledgers on the groundless accusation that income taxes had not been paid. Were they, Faro asked, actually agents from the White House? Indirect offers of large sums for suppression of the book had been received.

Faro, which is not his real name, was a mild, inoffensive young man with a faintly German accent. He had dark brown hair and a small mustache. He wore eyeglasses, which added to his surface air of cultural respectability. He said that the author of *The Strange Career of Mr. Hoover* had appeared at the office of William Faro, Inc., about a year earlier with a mass of documents relating to the activities of Herbert Hoover in China and Australia. Larger publishers had declined to consider it, but Faro, after consultation with his attorneys, had agreed to finance Hamill while the manuscript was being completed. He did not know very much about the author, Faro admitted. He believed him to be the "son of an Irish landowner" and this was the first thing he had written. No, he was not familiar with the motives which inspired the work; all he knew was that the Democratic party had no part in it.

At this point in our conversation Hamill appeared. Rather tall and about forty years old, he spoke with an English accent and explained that he had gathered the documents in all parts of the world. He had first heard of Herbert Hoover in London some time in 1903, when the future President was connected with Bewick, Moreing & Co. The material on which criticisms of Mr. Hoover was based had been collected in libraries in London and the United States. Like Faro, Hamill insisted that every statement in the volume could be proved. I asked whether they would consent

**FARO'S FAMOUS DOZEN**

1. THE STRANGE CAREER OF MR. HOOVER: UNDER TWO FLAGS by JOHN HAMILL. A sensational account of the unknown life of America's first citizen. Illustrated.
2. LADY CHATTERLEY'S HUSBANDS. An anonymous carrying on the delightful story of Connie and Mellors.
3. THE INTIMATE JOURNAL OF RUDOLPH VALENTINO. A delightful story of Connie and Mellors.
4. THE GIRLHOOD OF A PRIMA DONNA. All America's favorite story of a girl who was loved and married by millions of women suddenly stands out in his own light.
5. LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER, by D. H. LAWRENCE. Guessing her identity—and guessing correctly.
6. CELESTINE: THE DIARY OF A CHAMBERMAID. This novel runs the gamut of all human emotions and one of the greatest novels of our time.
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11. MEMOIRS AND MISTRESSES BY RALPH. A sensational and literary reminiscence of a physician.
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WILLIAM FARO, INC.

### BY John Hamill THE STRANGE CAREER OF MR. HOOVER UNDER TWO FLAGS

SOME CHAPTER HEADINGS FROM THE  
MOST SENSATIONAL EXPOSE  
OF OUR TIME!

MANDARINS and MOUNTEBANKS

WELCHING

DIRTY WORK IN AUSTRALIA

RACKETEERING IN BILLIONS

MANDARIN CHANG SAVES HIS HEAD AND HIS HONOR

THE ZINC ("STINK") CORPORATION

OIL, SLUSH and HUSH-HUSH

THE "RELIEF" OF BELGIUM

HOW EDITH CAVELL WAS BETRAYED

THEY BECAME RICH BY WORKING FOR NOTHING