


Big Ben

by Brian Gunnell

Relations between England and the United States had improved considerably since that unfortunate business with the tea. So much so, in fact, that Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, on their way to Paris, thought nothing of popping into the palace for a quick game of bridge with King George and Queen Sophia. A full account of this historic match is regrettably unavailable, but the story of that remarkable board 11 has survived. It was recorded as follows by a kibitzing versifier (we hesitate to call him a poet). Here it is:

Board 11 South Deals None Vul			
♠ J 10 8 4 ♥ K J 4 ♦ 8 6 ♣ K 7 5 4	♠ K 3 2 ♥ A 6 3 ♦ K J 10 7 ♣ Q 8 2		♠ A Q 9 7 5 ♥ — ♦ 9 5 4 3 2 ♣ A 6 3
♠ 6 ♥ Q 10 9 8 7 5 2 ♦ A Q ♣ J 10 9			
West	North	East	South
<i>Jefferson</i>	<i>George</i>	<i>Franklin</i>	<i>Sophia</i>
Pass	2 ♦	2 ♠	1 ♥
4 ♠	Dbl	All pass	3 ♥

The Queen decided that one heart
 Was how she would the auction start,
 Although it failed the Rule of Twenty
 She deemed her nine-count to be plenty.

Two diamonds by the King did not
 Deter old Ben, he had not got
 To where he was by feeble passes,
 "Two spades!" he told the ruling classes!

When Jefferson raised Ben to four
 George doubled with a mighty roar,
 For penalties, there was no doubt,
 The Queen would not take this one out.

"Don't lead a trump" Ben Franklin prayed,
 Alas, the Queen produced a spade.
 Now the going would be tough
 For him to get two diamond ruffs.

Winning the lead with dummy's ten
 Ben played a diamond, that was when
 King George the Third rose with his king,
 Indeed a most surprising thing.

The King's king won the trick and then
 His Majesty led trumps again,
 On which Sophia tossed away
 Her diamond ace, a brilliant play!

Ben Franklin, on the board again,
 Led diamond eight to George's ten,
 Which won the trick, and his last spade
 Was the next card that he played.

The court now buzzed, for all had heard,
 Sophia and King George the Third
 Had stopped the Philadelphia man
 From ruffing twice, as was his plan.

Ben praised the King "What a fine play,
 To jump up with the king that way,
 A clever crocodile-like coup,
 Your trump leads put my scheme askew"

Then the man from Monticello,
 Being a most gallant fellow,
 Praised the pitching of the ace,
 "The Queen's not just a pretty face".

The King said, "Down one is the score,
 You only have nine tricks, no more,
 A triumph for the monarchy,
 A setback for democracy"

Ben said, "Down one is not quite right,
 I have not yet begun to fight.
 Allow me to play out the hand,
 Because an end-play I have planned"

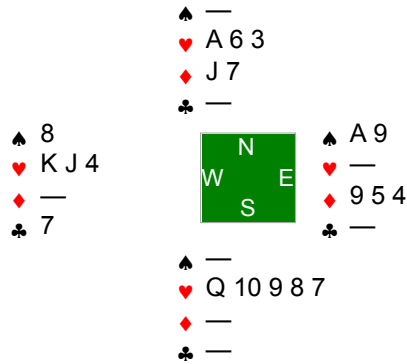
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The King's shape was 3-3-4-3,
That much Ben could clearly see,
A club throw-in was on the way
When the third club Ben would play.

"We're bested by a mere Yankee,
This day will live in infamy,
Enjoy your Insurrection Day"
Was all that King George had to say.

Yes, indeed, poor old George was end-played, these were the remaining cards after the third round of clubs:



All those heroic ruff-preventing diamond plays had only served to set up an end-play in the suit. Of course, old George could have arranged for Queen Sophia to win that club trick, but that would not have helped, the mere act of unblocking the clubs would give away the whereabouts of the ♥A and force declarer into the winning guess.