Published in *History of Political Economy* **28** (1996), 81–82.

A Note on "The Early History of the Theory of Strategic Games from Waldegrave to Borel" by Robert W. Dimand and Mary Ann Dimand

by

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In a paper in the 1992 annual supplement to this journal, Dimand and Dimand (1992) correctly point out that James Waldegrave should be given credit for discovering (in 1713) the idea of maxminimization in strictly competitive games and for providing the first explicit solution of a specific game (*le Her*). However, at the same time (p. 17) they make the false claim that the solution found by Waldegrave is reported by Todhunter (1865).[2] The exact history is important since Dimand and Dimand (1992, p. 18) state that Fisher (1934) both "replicated" Waldegrave's solution and quoted from pages of Todhunter's work "that presented Waldegrave's solution", leading the reader to infer that Fisher simply copied Waldegrave's solution as reported by Todhunter. In fact, given that Todhunter does not mention Waldegrave's solution, there is every reason to presume that Fisher "was unaware of Waldegrave's work" (Kuhn (1968, p. 4)) and found the solution independently.

Todhunter (paragraphs 187–190 and 230) discusses some of the correspondence between Pierre Rémond de Montmort and Nicolas Bernoulli concerning *le Her* that is reported in the second edition of Montmort's *Essay d'Analyse sur les Jeux de Hazard* (1713/1714?). Among this correspondence is a letter

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[2]Robert W. Dimand and Mary Ann Dimand acknowledge, in private correspondence, that their paper is in error on this point.

from Montmort to Bernoulli[3] that ends with a presentation of Waldegrave's solution. Todhunter discusses (paragraph 230) only the first part of this letter, which concerns exclusively issues other than *le Her*; in particular, he does not mention Waldegrave's solution. Guilbaud (1961) seems to have been the first modern writer to note that the latter part of the letter (translated in Baumol and Goldfeld (1968, 7–9)) presents Waldegrave's solution.

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[3]Note that 13 November 1713 is the date of the relevant letter from Waldegrave to Montmort, not the date of Montmort's letter to Bernoulli, as Dimand and Dimand (1992, p. 15) claim.