

FIRST PLAYING CARDS

They Seem to Have Sprung From the Naibis of the Saracens.

INVENTION OF A VENETIAN.

The Evidence Appears to Prove That Games With Cards Originated Toward the End of the Fourteenth Century—The Cards of Charles VI.

The earliest direct mention of playing cards discovered so far is in the "History of the City of Viterbo," says the New York Telegraph. The author quotes Covelluzzo, who wrote about the end of the fifteenth century:

"In the year of 1379 was brought into Viterbo the game of cards, which comes from the country of the Saracens and is with them called naib."

It is worthy of remark that Covelluzzo did not write at that date he mentioned, but a century later, in 1480, and it is quite possible that he may have been mistaken in attributing the cards to Saracenic origin or may have simply been quoting a popular tradition. The Saracens were familiar with naibis, the predecessor of cards, but they did not invent the game of cards, of which naibis were only a part.

The earliest date about which there can be no dispute at which playing cards are directly mentioned by a writer as a matter of his personal experience is that discovered in the register of the court treasurer of France, in the reign of Charles VI. The entry is under the date of Feb. 1, 1392, as follows:

"Given to Jaquesmin Grignonnet, painter, for three packs of playing cards, in gold and various colors and ornamented with several devices, to carry before the lord our king for his amusement 50 sols of Paris."

This is the foundation upon which is based the popular notion that playing cards were invented for the amusement of a crazy French king. Critics have pointed out that the amount paid is simply for the paper, printing and decoration of the cards. There is nothing in the entry that gives ground for supposing that the cards themselves were new.

There are on exhibition today at the National Library in Paris what are supposed to be seventeen of these cards that were painted for Charles VI, and this has strengthened the impression that they are the original model from which all playing cards have been copied. Unfortunately for the fame of the exhibit, it has been proved that the cards shown in Paris are really very old Venetian tarok cards and are part of an edition made at least as late as 1425.

During the twenty years that follow this date of the royal treasurer's (1392) literature is full of references to playing cards. Almost every author that mentions games of gambling paraphrases the particulars of one or more games of cards. But before that date no allusion has been found to a game that could be construed as a card game, although there are several writers who might reasonably be expected to mention cards if they were acquainted with them.

Hugh von Tymberg, who wrote in the second half of the thirteenth century; Petrarch, who wrote in the first half of the fourteenth century; Chaucer, who wrote in the second half of the fourteenth century, made no mention of cards, although in the writings of all of them there are references to gambling tables and implements.

In the Escorial library there is a manuscript composed by order of Don Alphonso the Wise, dated 1321, which gives the rules for a number of games, especially chess and dice, but does not contain a word about cards.

But one naturally asks if the earliest mention of cards is to be found in the register of the royal treasurer of France where did cards come from if they were not a new thing to him?

To go back a little, it is well known that there existed long before the date of any mention of playing cards a series of emblematic pictures called naibis, which were used by gypsies and others for the purpose of fortune telling and sorcery. It is probably these naibis that were brought to Europe by the Saracens, and perhaps they were supposed to be of Saracenic origin.

Authorities seem to be pretty well agreed that toward the end of the fourteenth century some inventive genius, probably a Venetian, selected a number of these naibis or pictures and added to them a series of numeral cards so as to convert them into implements by which the excitement of chance and the interest of gaming might be added to the amusement afforded by the original naibis.

The principal reason for assuming that cards originated in Italy and not in France is that the names of the cards themselves and the names of the earliest known games played with them are all Italian and that these Italian terms were carried all over Europe. If they were of French origin the nomenclature might be expected to be French.

There is an abundant evidence that the playing cards which rapidly found their way all over Europe were made in Venice. As each country got to making its own cards, the emblems of the suits were changed to please the national fancy until there is nothing left today of the original faith, clarity, justice and fortitude which were represented on the first Italian packs.

"Every rose has its thorn, and unfortunately the thorn outlives the rose."

QUEER HOSPITALITY.

A Curious Experience in the Wilds of Arabia.

Of the curious ideas of hospitality held by some of the natives of that wild country lying between Hamed and Damascus two travelers, Captain Butler and Captain Aynor, tell in the Geographical Magazine: "We found Feysul ibn Hasud in minor error of Arabia sitting in a low room, the roof of which was supported by wooden pillars. Around the sides of the room were spread carpets, on which sat his viziers and members of his court. He is a man of thirty-three years, with a dark, pointed beard, good, regular features, but eyes that are cold and cruel, and he has a nervous, fidgety manner and was all the time arranging his abba (cloak) and combing and curling his mustache and beard and adjusting himself in a small, cheap-looking glass that hung just behind him. Above his head on the wall hung his silver-mounted walking stick and a sword, the sheath of which was also covered in silver. He was very richly dressed."

"On our arrival at the house placed at our disposal we congratulated ourselves on our good fortune in having such a cordial welcome, but we were speedily disillusioned. We had not been there more than five minutes when Feysul's head slave, a richly dressed personage called Dahm, came to tell us that the emir would not take our camels or our money as he had plenty of both but that he would like to buy some European musk or of interest that we happened to have. This was one too true and during our five days' stay there there was a continual procession of slaves and hangers on from the east demanding things for the emir and his viziers and favorites and demanding them in such a way that it was impossible for us to refuse. At last we had practically nothing of any value left, having been forced of what we had, compasses, various cutlery and other articles of our kit."

"Apart from this system of more or less polite robbery we were well treated by the emir and had our food sent us from the castle by him. About three or four times a day we had a royal command from him and used to go up to the castle and drink many cups of coffee and excellent sweet tea with him and talk about his country and Europe. He was always very good to those occasions, and I honestly think he considered he was treating us very well in not taking all we had and turning us adrift to die in the desert."

RHEUMATISM.

One Course of Treatment For the Cure of the Disease.

To cure rheumatism it is necessary to rid the system of the excess of uric acid, and to do this a proper diet is even more important than the use of drugs, though in very severe cases the latter are not to be despised in conjunction with the dieting that is absolutely essential.

The Massachusetts General Hospital of Boston allows the following diet for its rheumatic patients: Graham or brown bread, white bread limited to one-half slice daily, corn, rice, milk, eggs, fruit, including strawberries, lemons, peas, all kinds of vegetables, except potatoes, tomatoes and asparagus, rich but fresh fish, butter, cheese, buttermilk, cream, quinine waters and toast. Avoid red meats, starch of potatoes, white bread and sugars.

The sensible use of water both internally and externally pays a large part in the prevention or cure of rheumatism. One or two glasses, either hot or cold, taken before breakfast every morning is excellent to start the organs of digestion for the day, and at least one glass should be taken between meals. Often the plain water will be enough to move a slightly constipated person, but if not a mild laxative water may be taken instead. It is very essential to keep the bowels open in cases of rheumatism.

Uric acid in the system is a poison and it must not be forgotten that poisonous waste matter is also eliminated through the skin. The pores of the skin must be kept freely open and not allowed to become clogged if we hope to obtain the best results with rheumatic cases. A hot bath at bedtime is often very helpful.—Delineator

MadSening Snuff.

On the Amazon river several Indian tribes use snuff, called pareca, which is made of the seeds of a species of plant. When a bout of snuff taking is determined on the people become highly intoxicated and then use the snuff. The effect of pareca is so violent that the taker drops as if shot and lies insensible for some time. Those more accustomed to it are highly excited, dancing and singing as if mad. The effect soon subsides. Other tribes use it to repel ague during the wet season.

Plenty to Do Them.

"Remember that you can't do everything with money."
"Ob, I know that. But the things you can't do with money are being done by so many other people that there's no reason why one should want to do them."—Chicago Record-Herald.

Sightseeing.

"How did you manage to see everything in Rome inside of two days?"
"Well, you see, we got up early, my wife went to the shops, my daughter to the picture galleries, and I took to the restaurants. In the evening we compared notes."—Fliegende Blatter.

Contradictory.

"There is safety in numbers," quoted the wise guy.
"Yes, until you discover that too many 'cooks spoil the broth,' added the simple mug.—Philadelphia Record.

Ought to Have Known Better.

"What's the matter?"
"Just quarreled with my wife."
"What about?"
"She said that a woman whom we met was beautiful and I agreed with her."—Houston Post.

DANGER FROM ICE.

Not Article of Food Is So Carelessly Handled.

A writer in the Atlantic Monthly emphasizes one cause of the danger of infection from ice.

Scarcely another article of human consumption receives so much direct handling just before its use as does this food. Milk and water, tea and coffee are poured. Bread, meat and butter are cut. Bread, probably handled more than any other food on the list, has a hard crust which offers a rather unfavorable lodging place for germ life. Ice, on the contrary, washes the hands of every person who handles it and affords an ever ready liquid medium for the immediate absorption of the hosts of bacteria which hands may carry. The carelessness of the handlers of ice, their utter disregard of the resting places where it may receive infection, may be partly due to their lack of realization that ice is a food, as real a food as meat. Whatever the cause, few substances which pass through the digestive processes of man receive such treatment. Its surface contaminated by the passage of men and horses in the cutting, its sides and base fouled by muddled platforms and smirched straw, covered with the filth of black ice cars and dust swept freight stations, your cake of ice commonly receives its only cleansing just before it enters the kitchen. So far as the keenum is concerned, this is generally a hasty brush with a fine worn whisk broom well filled with the dust of the street and blackened with constant use. According to the personal testimony of various ice men, not even the pretention of a momentary washing beneath the faucet is ordinarily taken.

MISSION OF THE LAND.

To Produce Commodities For the Service of Mankind.

The mission of the land is to produce and keep on producing food, fuel, stock, lumber and other commodities for the service of man. He who exploits land and is indifferent to this is guilty of a moral wrong, and he who takes good land out of commission and suffers it to be unproductive and useless is guilty of a greater one. This is the only criterion by which we can properly judge of the right of an individual to own land in large tracts.

The good results attendant upon small individual holdings are natural. The purposes of nature in the upward evolution of man are usually better carried out in this way, and not because, as is so frequently argued, every man has an inherent right to its ownership. The lazy, the incapable and the densely ignorant necessarily have no such right, and land is too precious and its mission too high to be thus wasted.

If the owner of a great country estate can farm his land as well as or better than if it were in small holdings, he made two parts of corn or two blades of grass grow where one grew before; if he supplies a station with a better breed of horses, cattle or sheep, well and good. No one with any knowledge of economics could say he was doing any injury to the world or mankind. It is not the amount of land that he owns, but what he does with it for which he is morally responsible.—David Bradford in Atlantic.

She Makes a Suggestion.

"How beautiful and clean the horizon looks," said Polly as on the second day out she came up on deck and threw herself down in the steamer chair beside me.
"Well it ought to be," said I, looking up from my book. "The captain has been sweeping it with his glass for the past six hours."
"That reminds me," said Polly, turning two very grave brown eyes upon me. "Did you remember to bring that vacuum cleaner along with you, as I suggested?"
"No," said I unvarnished. "I remembered to forget it, however. What on earth does anybody want with a vacuum cleaner at sea?"
"It was only for you, dear," said Polly. "I thought you would like to have your brains massaged with it occasionally."—New York Times.

The Minister's Tools.

No workman can do good work without sufficient tools. Books are the minister's tools. He must have them if he is to serve his people well. Yet many a minister's salary is so small that he is unable to provide the common necessities for his family and have enough left to supply himself with needed books. The church that makes it impossible for its pastor to buy books harms itself even more than it harms the minister.—Cumberland Presbyterian.

Etiquette.

In our republican atmosphere old fashioned etiquette has ceased to be necessary, but the word "etiquette" is suggested whenever one hears the phrase "that's the ticket," for "etiquette" is French for "ticket," and its present English signification sprang from the old custom of distributing tickets or etiquettes which contained the ceremonies, etc., to be observed at any formal event, exactly like our word "program."

An Alibi.

Examiner—What is an alibi? Candidate For the Bar—An alibi is committing a crime in one place when you are in another place. If you can be in two other places, the alibi is all the stronger in law.—Puck.

Marriage.

"Marriage is a lottery," quoted the wise guy.
"Oh, that's an antiquated idea," observed the simple mug. "Nowadays it's a game of skill."—Philadelphia Record.

The Fellow Who Doesn't Allow an Alarm Clock to Interfere with his Morning Nap Illustrates the Triumph of Mind over Matter.—Philadelphia Record.

GOING FOR THE DOCTOR.

And Also the Reason Why He Was After the Medical Man.

"Yes, your honor," said the man who had been arrested for driving his automobile at an illegal rate of speed "I admit that I was running thirty miles an hour, but I was going for the doctor."

"Oh, you were going for the doctor eh? Can you offer any proof to substantiate that statement?"
"Yes, I can bring in the doctor himself as a witness, if necessary."
"Um! That ought to make a difference. The law is explicit, but we must grant that there may be extenuating circumstances. There have been times when the court would have been glad to run thirty miles an hour if the court could have done so. Certainly a man should not be held too strictly to the provisions of the law if he happens to violate it for the purpose of trying to save a life. The court is very strongly inclined to dismiss the case. Did you explain to the officer who arrested you that you were going for the doctor?"
"Yes, your honor."
"Officer, what have you to say?"
"Well, your honor, I asked him, when he said he was going for the doctor, what he was going for the doctor for."

"Yes, that was very sensible. What was he going for the doctor for?"
"For to take the doctor and two young ladies for a ride, as I found out unbeknownst to him."

"Thirty dollars and costs."—Chicago Record-Herald.

A COLLECTOR'S RUSE.

The Way He Secured a Rare Piece of Dresden Ware.

We should cultivate our fancy for old china as did the late Mr. Wertheimer, the art dealer, concerning whom there is a story that every bargain hunter should take to heart.
Wertheimer was one day passing through Mayfair when he noticed a sale about to take place of the "furniture and household effects of a deceased nobleman." He walked through the rooms where dealers were critically examining choice specimens of undoubtedly genuine Chippendale and Sheraton, interspersed among early Victorian furniture, his eyes apparently dwelling on nothing. But when the sale was about to commence he asked the auctioneer if he would take £5,000 for everything in the house.
The offer was accepted. "Now you can resell everything for me," said Mr. Wertheimer, "except this," and he took down from the mantelpiece a dirty ornament some nine inches high and put it into his pocket. It was a piece of the rarest Dresden, bearing the coveted mark of the wand of Aesculapius, which he afterward sold for £10,000.

How the dealers metaphorically kicked themselves for overlooking it and how they bid against one another in the chance of securing a similar treasure is still a tradition in Bond street.—London Chronicle.

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