

**JOHN ASHTON**

THE HISTORY  
OF GAMBLING  
IN ENGLAND

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*The History of Gambling in England:*

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# The History of Gambling in England

## INTRODUCTORY

Difference between Gaming and Gambling – Universality and Antiquity of Gambling – Isis and Osiris – Games and Dice of the Egyptians – China and India – The Jews – Among the Greeks and Romans – Among Mahometans – Early Dicing – Dicing in England in the 13th and 14th Centuries – In the 17th Century – Celebrated Gamblers – Bouchier – Swiss Anecdote – Dicing in the 18th Century.

Gaming is derived from the Saxon word *Gamen*, meaning *joy*, *pleasure*, *sports*, or *gaming*— and is so interpreted by Bailey, in his Dictionary of 1736; whilst Johnson gives *Gamble* —*to play extravagantly for money*, and this distinction is to be borne in mind in the perusal of this book; although the older term was in use until the invention of the later – as we see in Cotton’s *Compleat Gamester* (1674), in which he gives the following excellent definition of the word: – “*Gaming* is an enchanting *witchery*, gotten between *Idleness* and *Avarice*: an itching disease,

that makes some scratch the head, whilst others, as if they were bitten by a *Tarantula*, are laughing themselves to death; or, lastly, it is a paralytical distemper, which, seizing the arm, the man cannot chuse but shake his elbow. It hath this ill property above all other Vices, that it renders a man incapable of prosecuting any serious action, and makes him always unsatisfied with his own condition; he is either lifted up to the top of mad joy with success, or plung'd to the bottom of despair by misfortune, always in extreams, always in a storm; this minute the Gamester's countenance is so serene and calm, that one would think nothing could disturb it, and the next minute, so stormy and tempestuous that it threatens destruction to itself and others; and, as he is transported with joy when he wins, so, losing, is he tost upon the billows of a high swelling passion, till he hath lost sight, both of sense and reason."

*Gambling*, as distinguished from *Gaming*, or playing, I take to mean an indulgence in those games, or exercises, in which *chance* assumes a more important character; and my object is to draw attention to the fact, that the *money motive* increases, as chance predominates over skill. It is taken up as a quicker road to wealth than by pursuing honest industry, and everyone engaged in it, be it dabbling on the Stock Exchange, Betting on Horse Racing, or otherwise, hopes to win, for it is clear that if he knew he should lose, no fool would embark in it. The direct appropriation of other people's property to one's own use, is, undoubtedly, the more simple, but it has the disadvantage of being both vulgar

and dangerous; so we either appropriate our neighbour's goods, or he does ours, by gambling with him, for it is certain that if one gains, the other loses. The winner is not revered, and the loser is not pitied. But it is a disease that is most contagious, and if a man is known to have made a lucky *coup*, say, on the Stock Exchange, hundreds rush in to follow his example, as they would were a successful gold field discovered – the warning of those that perish by the way is unheeded.

Of the universality of gambling there is no doubt, and it seems to be inherent in human nature. We can understand its being introduced from one nation to another – but, unless it developed naturally, how can we account for aboriginals, like the natives of New England, who had never had intercourse with foreign folk, but whom Governor Winslow<sup>1</sup> describes as being advanced gamblers. “It happened that two of their men fell out, as they were in game (for they use gaming as much as anywhere; and will play away all, even the skin from their backs; yea, and for their wives’ skins also, although they may be many miles distant from them, as myself have seen), and, growing to great heat, the one killed the other.”<sup>2</sup>

The antiquity of gambling is incontestable, and can be authentically proved, both by Egyptian paintings, and by finding the materials in tombs of undoubted genuineness; and it is even attributed to the gods themselves, as we read in Plutarch’s

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<sup>1</sup> *Good News from New England... Written by E. W. Lon.* 1624.

<sup>2</sup> See Longfellow’s *Hiawatha*, for Indian gambling.

Ἴσιδος καὶ Ὀσιριδος “Now the story of Isis and Osiris, its most insignificant and superfluous parts omitted, is thus briefly narrated: – Rhea, they say, having accompanied with Saturn by stealth, was discovered by the Sun, who, hereupon, denounced a curse upon her, *that she should not be delivered in any month or year*. Mercury, however, being likewise in love with the same goddess, in recompense for the favours which he had received from her, *plays at tables* with the Moon, and wins from her the seventieth part of each of her illuminations; these several parts, making, in the whole, five new days, he afterwards joined together, and added to the three hundred and sixty, of which the year formerly consisted: which days are even yet called by the Egyptians, the *Epact*, or *Superadded*, and observed by them as the birth days of their Gods.”

But to descend from the sublimity of mythology to prosaic fact, we know that the Egyptians played at the game of *Tau*, or Game of Robbers, afterwards the *Ludus Latrunculorum* of the Romans, at that of *Hab em hau*, or *The Game of the Bowl*, and at *Senat*, or *Draughts*. Of this latter game we have ocular demonstration in the upper Egyptian gallery of the British Museum, where, in a case containing the throne, &c., of Queen Hatasu (b. c. 1600) are her draught board, and twenty pieces, ten of light-coloured wood, nine of dark wood, and one of ivory – all having a lion’s head. These were all, probably, games of skill; but in the same case is an ivory Astragal, the earliest known form of dice, which could have been of no use except for gambling. The

Astragal, which is familiarly known to us as a “knuckle bone,” or “huckle bone,” is still used by anatomists, as the name of a bone in the hind leg of cloven footed animals which articulates with the tibia, and helps to form the ankle joint. The bones used in gambling were, generally, those of sheep; but the Astragals of the antelope were much prized on account of their superior elegance. They also had regular dice, numbered like ours, which have been found at Thebes and elsewhere; and, although there are none in our national museum, there are some in that of Berlin; but these are not considered to be of great antiquity. The Egyptians also played at the game of *Atep*, which is exactly like the favourite Italian game of Mora, or guessing at the number of fingers extended. Over a picture of two Egyptians playing at this gambling game is written, “Let it be said”: or, as we might say, “Guess,” or “How Many?” Sometimes they played the game back to back, and then a third person had to act as referee.

The Chinese and Indian games of skill, such as Chess, are of great antiquity; but, perhaps, the oldest game is that of *Enclosing*, called *Wei-ki* in Chinese, and *Go* in Japanese. It is said to have been invented by the Emperor Yao, 2300 b. c., but the earliest record of the game is in 300 b. c. It is a game like *Krieg spiel*, a game of war. There are not only typical representatives of the various arms, but the armies themselves, some 200 men on each side; they form encampments, and furnish them with defences; and they slay, not merely a single man, as in other games, but, frequently, hosts of men. There is no record of its



being a gambling game, but the modern Chinese is an inveterate gambler.

As far as we know, the ancient Jews did not gamble except by drawing, or casting lots; and as we find no word against it in the inspired writings, and, as even one of the apostles was chosen by lot (Acts i. 26), it must be assumed that this form of gambling meets with the Divine approval. We are not told how the lots were *drawn*; but the *casting* of lots pre-supposes the use of dice, and this seems to have been practised from very early times, for we find in Lev. xvi. 8, that “Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scape goat.” And the promised land was expressly and divinely ordained to be divided by an appeal to chance. Num. xxvi. 52 and 55, 56, “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying... Notwithstanding the land shall be divided by lot: according to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit. According to the lot shall the possession thereof be divided between many and few.” The reader can find very many more references to the use of the “lot” in any Concordance of the Bible. But in their later days, as at the present time, the Jews did gamble, as Disney<sup>3</sup> tells us when writing on Gaming amongst the Jews.

“Though they had no written law for it, Gamesters were *excluded from the Magistracy*, incapable of being chosen into the greater or lesser Sanhedrim; nor could they be admitted

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<sup>3</sup> *A View of Ancient Laws against Immorality and Profaneness.* By John Disney. Camb. 1729.

as *Witnesses* in any Court of Justice, till they were perfectly reformed. Some of their reasons for excluding such from the Magistracy were, that their gaming gave sufficient presumption of their *Avarice*, and, besides, was an employment *no way conducing to the public good*: a covetous man, and one who is not wise and public spirited, being very unfit for offices of so much trust and power, as well as dignity. The presumption of *Avarice* was the cause, also (and a very good one), of not admitting *the evidence* of such a man. And that other notion they had, that the gain arising from play was a *sort of Rapine*, is as just a ground for the *Infamy* which stained his character, and subjected him to these incapacities.

“This last consideration, that money won by gaming was looked upon as got by *Theft*, makes it reasonable to conclude that such money was to be *restored*, and that the winning gamester was *punished* as for *Theft*: which was not, by their law, a capital crime; but answered for, in smaller cases (and, probably, in this, among the rest), by *double Restitution*: Exod. xxii. 9.

“But the partiality of that people is evident, in extending the notion of Theft, only to *Gaming amongst themselves*; *i. e.*, native Jews and proselytes of righteousness; for, if a Jew played, and won of a Gentile, it was no Theft in him: but it was forbidden to him on another account, as Gaming is an application of mind entirely useless to human society. For, say the Talmudists, ‘Tho’ he that games with a Gentile does not offend against the prohibition of Theft, he violates that *de rebus inanibus non*

*incumbendo*: it does not become a man, at any time of his life, to make anything his business which does not relate to the study of wisdom or the public good.' Now, as this was only a prohibition of their doctors, perhaps the law, or usage in such cases might take place, that the offender was to be scourged."

Among the Greeks and Romans the first gambling implement was the ἀστραγαλός, or (Lat.) *Talus*, before spoken of. In the course of time the sides were numbered, and, afterwards, they were made of ivory, onyx, &c., specimens of which may be seen in the Etruscan Saloon of the British Museum, Case N. In the Terra Cotta room is a charming group of two girls playing with Astragals, and in the Third Vase room, on Stand I., is a vase, or drinking vessel, in the shape of an Astragal (E. 804). Subsequently the Tessera, or cubical die, similar to that now used, came into vogue (samples of which may be seen in Case N. in the Etruscan Saloon), and they were made of ivory, bone, porcelain, and stone. Loaded dice have been found in Pompeii. They also had other games among the Romans, such as *Par et Impar* (odd or even), in which almonds, beans, or anything else, were held in the hand, and guessed at – and the modern Italian game of Mora was also in vogue.

But gambling was looked down upon in Rome, and the term *aleator*, or gambler, was one of reproach – and many were the edicts against it: utterly useless, of course, but it was allowed during the Saturnalia. Money lost at play could not be legally recovered by the winner, and money paid by the loser might by

him be recovered from the person who had won and received the same.

The excavations at Pompeii and other places in modern times have revealed things not known in writings; and, treating of the subject of gambling, we are much indebted to Sig. Rodolfo Lanciani, Professor of Archæology in the University of Rome. Among other things, he tells us how, in the spring of 1876, during the construction of the Via Volturno, near the Prætorian Camp, a Roman tavern was discovered, containing besides many hundred amphoræ, the “sign” of the establishment engraved on a marble slab.

ABEMVS	INCENA
PVLLVM	PISCEM
PERNAM	PAONEM
BENA TORES	

The meaning of this sign is double: it tells the customers that a good supper was always ready within, and that the gaming tables were always open to gamblers. The sign, in fact, is a *tabula lusoria* in itself, as shown by the characteristic arrangement of the thirty-six letters in three lines, and six groups of six letters each. Orthography has been freely sacrificed to this arrangement (*abemus* standing for *habemus*, *cena* for *cenam*). The last word of the fourth line shows that the men who patronised the establishment were the *Venatores immunes*, a special troop of

Prætorians, into whose custody the *vivarium* of wild beasts and the *amphitheatrum castrense* were given.

He also tells us that so intense was the love of the Roman for games of hazard, that wherever he had excavated the pavement of a portico, of a basilica, of a bath, or any flat surface accessible to the public, he always found gaming tables engraved or scratched on the marble or stone slabs for the amusement of idle men, always ready to cheat each other out of their money.

The evidence of this fact is to be found in the Forum, in the Basilica Julia, in the corridors of the Coliseum, on the steps of the temple of Venus at Rome, in the square of the front of the portico of the Twelve Gods, and even in the House of the Vestals, after its secularisation in 393. Gaming tables are especially abundant in barracks, such as those of the seventh battalion of *vigiles*, near by St Critogono, and of the police at Ostia and Porto, and of the Roman encampment near Guise, in the Department of the Aisne. Sometimes when the camp was moved from place to place, or else from Italy to the frontiers of the empire, the men would not hesitate to carry the heavy tables with their luggage. Two, of pure Roman make, have been discovered at Rusicade, in Numidia, and at Ain-Kebira, in Mauritania. Naturally enough they could not be wanting in the Prætorian camp and in the taverns patronised by its turbulent garrison, where the time was spent in revelling and gambling, and in riots ending in fights and bloodshed. To these scenes of violence the wording of the tables often refers; such as

LEVATE	LVDERE
NESCIS	DALVSO
RILOCV	RECEDE

“Get up! You know nothing about the game; make room for better players!” Two paintings were discovered, in Nov. 1876, in a tavern at Pompeii, in one of which are seen two players seated on stools opposite each other, and holding on their knees the gaming table, upon which are arranged, in various lines, several *latrunculi*<sup>4</sup> of various colours, yellow, black and white. The man on the left shakes a yellow dice box, and exclaims, “*Exsi*” (I am out). The other points to the dice, and says, “*Non tria, duas est*” (Not three points, but two). In the next picture the same individuals have sprung to their feet, and show fight. The younger says, “Not two, but three; I have the game!” Whereupon, the other man, after flinging at him the grossest insult, repeats his assertion, “*Ego fui.*” The altercation ends with the appearance of the tavernkeeper, who pushes both men into the street, and exclaims, “*Itis foris rix satis*” (Go out of my shop if you want to fight).

During Sig. Lanciani’s lifetime, a hundred, or more, tables have been found in Rome, and they belong to six different games of hazard; in some of them the mere chance of dice-throwing was coupled with a certain amount of skill in moving the men.

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<sup>4</sup> Pieces used in playing the *ludus latrunculorum*, before alluded to.

Their outline is always the same: there are three horizontal lines at an equal distance, each line containing twelve signs – thirty-six in all. The signs vary in almost every table; there are circles, squares, vertical bars, leaves, letters, monograms, crosses, crescents and immodest symbols: the majority of these tables (sixty-five) contain words arranged so as to make a full sentence with the thirty-six letters. These sentences speak of the fortune, and good, or bad, luck of the game, of the skill and pluck of the players, of the favour, or hostility, of bystanders and betting men. Sometimes they invite you to try the seduction of gambling, sometimes they warn of the risks incurred.

Children were initiated into the seductions of gambling by playing “nuts,” a pastime cherished also by elder people. In the spring of 1878 a life-size statuette of a boy playing at nuts was discovered in the cemetery of the Agro Verano, near St Lorenzo fuori le mura. The statuette, cut in Pentelic marble, represents the young gambler leaning forward, as if he had thrown, or was about to throw, the nut; and his countenance shows anxiety and uncertainty as to the success of his trial.

The game could be played in several ways. One, still popular among Italian boys, was to make a pyramidal “castle” with four nuts, three at the base and one on the top, and then to try and knock it down with the fifth nut thrown from a certain distance. Another way was to design a triangle on the floor with chalk, subdividing it into several compartments by means of lines parallel to the base; the winnings were regulated according to the

compartment in which the nut fell and remained. Italian boys are still very fond of this game, which they call *Campana*, because the figure drawn on the floor is in the shape of a bell: it is played with coppers. There was a third game at nuts, in which the players placed their stakes in a vase with a large opening. The one who succeeded first in throwing his missile inside the jar would gain its contents.

They also tossed “head or tail,” betting on which side a piece of money, thrown up in the air, would come down. The Greeks used for this game a shell, black on one side, white on the other, and called it “Night or day.” The Romans used a copper “*as*” with the head of Janus on one side, and the prow of a galley on the other, and they called their game *Capita aut navim* (head or ship).

Mahomet discountenanced gambling, as we find in the Koran (Sale’s translation, Lon. 1734), p. 25. “They will ask thee concerning wine and lots. Answer: In both there is great sin, and also some things of use unto men; but their sinfulness is greater than their use.” Sale has explanatory footnotes. He says “Lots. The original word, *al Meiser*, properly signifies a particular game performed with arrows, and much in use with the pagan Arabs. But by Lots we are here to understand all games whatsoever, which are subject to chance or hazard, as dice, cards, &c.” And, again, on p. 94. “O true believers, surely wine, and lots, and images, and divining arrows are an abomination of the work of Satan; therefore avoid them, that ye may prosper.”

*À propos* of this denunciation of gambling in the Koran, is the



following highly interesting letter of Emmanuel Deutsch, in the *Athenæum* of Sep. 28, 1867: —

“It may interest the writer of the note on *κυβεια* (Eph. iv. 14), (the only word for ‘gambling’ used in the Bible) in your recent ‘Weekly Gossip,’ to learn that this word was in very common use among Paul’s kith and kin for ‘cube,’ ‘dice,’ ‘dicery,’ and occurs frequently in the Talmud and Midrash. As Aristotle couples a dice player (*κυβευτης*) with a ‘bath robber’ (*λωποδυτης*), and with a ‘thief’ (*ληστης* — a word no less frequently used in the Talmud); so the Mishnah declares unfit either as judge or witness ‘a *κυβεια*-player, a usurer, a pigeon-flyer (betting man), a vender of illegal (seventh year) produce, and a slave.’ A mitigating clause — proposed by one of the weightiest legal authorities, to the effect that the gambler and his kin should only be disqualified ‘if they have but that one profession’ — is distinctly negated by the majority, and the rule remains absolute. The classical word for the gambler, or dice player, appears aramaized in the same sources into something like *kubiustis*, as the following curious instances may show. When the Angel, after having wrestled with Jacob all night, asks him to let him go, ‘for the dawn hath risen,’ Jacob is made to reply to him, ‘Art thou a thief, or a *kubiustis*, that thou art afraid of the day?’ To which the Angel replies, ‘No, I am not; but it is my turn to-day, and for the first time, to sing the Angelic Hymn of Praise in Heaven: let me go.’”

In another Talmudical passage, an early Biblical critic is discussing certain arithmetical difficulties in the Pentateuch.

Thus, he finds the number of the Levites (in Numbers) to differ, when summed up from the single items, from that given in the total. Worse than that, he finds that all the gold and silver contributed to the sanctuary is not accounted for; and, clinching his argument, he cries, "Is then your Master, Moses, a thief or a *kubiustis*?" The critic is then informed of a certain difference between "sacred" and other coins, and he further gets a lesson in the matter of Levites and First-born, which silences him. Again, the Talmud decides that if a man have bought a slave who turns out to be a thief or a *kubiustis*— which has been erroneously explained to mean a "man-stealer" – he has no redress. He must keep him, as he bought him, or send him away, for he bought him with all his vices.

No wonder dice-playing was tantamount to a crime in those declining days. There was, notwithstanding the severe laws against it, hardly a more common and more ruinous pastime – a pastime in which Cicero himself, who places a gambler on a par with an adulterer, did not disdain to indulge in his old days, claiming it as a privilege of "Age." Augustus was a passionate dice-player. Nero played the points – for they also played it by points – at 400,000 sesterces. Caligula, after a long spell of ill-luck, in which he had lost all his money, rushed into the streets, had two innocent Roman knights seized, and ordered their goods to be confiscated. Whereupon he returned to his game, remarking that this had been the luckiest throw he had had for a long time. Claudius had his carriages arranged for dicing

convenience, and wrote a work on the subject. Nor was it all fair play with those ancients. Aristotle already knows of a way by which the dice can be made to fall as the player wishes them; and even the cunningly constructed, turret-shaped dice cup did not prevent occasional “mendings” of luck. The Berlin Museum contains one “charged” die, and another with a double four. The great affection for this game is seen, among other things, by the common proverbs taken from it, and the no less than sixty-four names given to the different throws, taken from kings, heroes, gods, hetairæ, animals, and the rest. But the word was also used in a mathematical sense. In a cosmogonical discussion of the Midrash, the earth is likened to a “cubus.”

The use of dice in England is of great antiquity, dating from the advent of the Saxons and the Danes and Romans; indeed, all the northern nations were passionately addicted to gambling. Tacitus (*de Moribus Germ.*) tells us that the ancient Germans would not only hazard all their wealth, but even stake their liberty upon the throw of the dice; “and he who loses submits to servitude, though younger and stronger than his antagonist, and patiently permits himself to be bound, and sold in the market; and this *madness* they dignify by the name of *honour*.”

In early English times we get occasional glimpses of gambling with dice. Ordericus Vitalis (1075-1143) tells us that “the clergymen and bishops are fond of dice-playing” – and John of Salisbury (1110-1182) calls it “the damnable art of dice-playing.” In 1190 a curious edict was promulgated, which shows

how generally gambling prevailed even among the lower classes at that period. This edict was established for the regulation of the Christian army under the command of Richard the First of England and Philip of France during the Crusade. It prohibits any person in the army, beneath the degree of knight, from playing at any sort of game for money: knights and clergymen might play for money, but none of them were permitted to lose more than twenty shillings in one whole day and night, under a penalty of one hundred shillings, to be paid to the archbishops in the army. The two monarchs had the privilege of playing for what they pleased, but their attendants were restricted to the sum of twenty shillings, and, if they exceeded, they were to be whipped naked through the army for three days. The decrees established by the Council held at Worcester in the twenty-fourth year of Henry III. prohibited the clergy from playing at *dice* or *chess*, but neither the one nor the other of these games are mentioned in the succeeding statutes before the twelfth year of Richard II., when *diceing* is particularised and expressly forbidden.

The letter books of the Corporation of the City of London, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, give us several examples of diceing. “4 Ed. II., a. d. 1311. Elmer de Multone was attached, for that he was indicted in the Ward of Chepe for being a common night walker; and, in the day, is wont to entice strangers and persons unknown, to a tavern, and there deceive them by using false dice. And, also, for that he was indicted in Tower Ward, for being a bruiser and night walker, against the

peace; as, also, for being a common *rorere*.<sup>5</sup> And, also, for that he was indicted in the Ward of Crepelgate for playing at dice, and for that he is wont to entice men into a tavern, and to make them play at dice there against their will. He appeared, and, being asked how he would acquit himself thereof, he said that he was not guilty, and put himself upon the country as to the same. And the jury came, by Adam Trugge and others, on the panel; and they said, upon their oath, that he is guilty of all the trespasses aforesaid. Therefore he was committed to prison,” &c.

The next is from a Proclamation made for the safe keeping of the City. 8 Ed., III. a. d. 1334. “Also, we do forbid, on the same pain of imprisonment, that any man shall go about, at this Feast of Christmas, with companions disguised with false faces,<sup>6</sup> or in any other manner, to the houses of the good folks of the City, for playing at dice there; but let each one keep himself quiet and at his ease within his own house.”

“50 Ed. III., a. d. 1376. Nicholas Prestone, tailor, and John Outlawe, were attached to make answer to John atte Hille, and William, his brother, in a plea of deceit and falsehood; for that the same John Outlawe, at divers times between the Feast of Our Lord’s Nativity, in the 49th year, &c., and the First Sunday in Lent, then next ensuing, came to the said John atte Hille and William, and asked if they wished to gain some money at tables or at chequers, commonly called ‘*quek*’; to which they said ‘Yes’;

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<sup>5</sup> Riotous person.

<sup>6</sup> Masks.

whereupon the same John Outlawe said they must follow him, and he would show them the place, and a man there, from whom they could easily win; and further said that he would be partner with them, to win or to lose.

“And they followed him to the house of the said Nicholas in Friday Street, and there they found the said Nicholas with a pair of tables, on the outside of which was painted a chequer board, that is called a ‘*quek*.’ And the said Nicholas asked them if they would play at tables for money; whereupon the said complainants, knowing of no deceit, or ill-intent, being urged and encouraged thereto by the same John Outlawe, played with him at tables and lost a sum of money, owing to false dice.

“And the said John then left them to play alone; and, after that, they still continued to lose. The said tables were then turned, and the complainants played with the defendant Nicholas at ‘*quek*’ until they had lost at the games of tables and *quek* 39s. 2d. After which the complainants, wondering at their continued losing, examined the board at which they had been playing and found it to be false and deceptive; seeing that in three quarters of the board all the black points were so depressed that all the white points in the same quarters were higher than the black points in the same; and, on the fourth quarter of the board, all the white points were so depressed that all the black points in that quarter were higher than the white. They inspected and examined also the dice with which they had first played at tables, and found them to be false and defective. And, because they would play

no longer, the said Nicholas and John Outlawe stripped John atte Hille of of a cloak, 16 shillings in value, which they still retained.”

They were found guilty and sentenced to return the money lost and the cloak, or its value, and “Afterwards, on the prosecution of Ralph Strode, Common Serjeant of the said City, by another jury, they were found guilty of the fraud and deception so imputed to them. Therefore it was awarded that they should have the punishment of the pillory, to stand thereon for one hour in the day, and that the said false chequer board should be burnt beneath them, the Sheriff causing the reason for their punishment to be proclaimed. And, after that, they were to be taken back to the Prison of Newgate, there to remain until the Mayor and Aldermen should give orders for their release.”

And so dicing went on, unimpaired in popularity, in spite of legal fulminations, until Elizabeth’s time, when we probably hear more of it, owing to the greater dissemination of literature in that reign. In 1551 there was a famous murder, in which Mr Arden of Feversham was killed whilst playing a game of tables with one Mosbie, the paramour of his wife, who had made Mosbie a present of a pair of *silver dice* to reconcile a disagreement that had subsisted between them. Shakespeare mentions dice and dicing thirteen times in seven plays, and in Jonson, and the early dramatists, there are many allusions to this species of gambling.

In the British Museum is a little MS. book<sup>7</sup> called “New

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<sup>7</sup> Harl. MSS., 6395.

Passages and Jests,” which were collected by Sir Nicholas L’Estrange of Hunstanton, Bart., who died in 1669, and in one of the anecdotes we get an insight into cheating at dice. “Sir William Herbert, playing at dice with another gentleman, there arose some questions about a cast. Sir William’s antagonist declared it was a four and a five; he as positively insisted that it was a five and a six: the other then swore with a bitter imprecation that it was as he said. Sir William then replied, ‘Thou art a perjured knave; for, give me a sixpence, and if there be a four upon the dice, I will return you a thousand pounds’; at which the other was presently abashed, for, indeed, the dice were false, and of a *high cut*, without a four.”

Charles Cotton, in his *Compleat Gamester*, gives us a vivid account of dicing, as it then was, at an ordinary, after dark.

“The day being shut in, you may properly compare this place to those Countries which lye far in the North, where it is as clear at midnight as at noonday... This is the time (when ravenous beasts usually seek their prey) when in comes shoals of *Huffs*, *Hectors*, *Setters*, *Gilts*, *Pads*, *Biters*, *Divers*, *Lifters*, *Filers*, *Budgies*, *Droppers*, *Crossbyters*, &c., and these may all pass under the general and common appellation of *Rooks*... Some of these *Rooks* will be very importunate to borrow money of you without any intention to pay you; or to go with you seven to twelve, half a crown, or more, whereby, without a very great chance (ten to one, or more), he is sure to win. If you are sensible hereof, and refuse his proposition, they will take it so ill, that, if you have not



an especiall care, they will pick your pocket, nim your gold or silver buttons off your Cloak or Coat, or, it may be, draw your silver-hilted sword out of your belt, without discovery, especially if you are eager upon your Cast, which is done thus: the silver buttons are strung, or run upon Cats guts fastened at the upper and nether ends; now, by ripping both ends very ingeniously, give it the gentle pull, and so rub off with the buttons; and, if your Cloak be loose, 'tis ten to one they have it.

“But that which will provoke (in my opinion) any man’s rage to a just satisfaction, is their throwing many times at a good Sum with a *dry fist*; (as they call it) that is, if they nick you, ‘tis theirs; if they lose, they owe you so much, with many other quilllets: some I have known so abominably impudent, that they would snatch up the Stakes, and, thereupon, instantly draw, saying, if you will have your money, you must fight for it; for he is a Gentleman, and will not want: however, if you will be patient, he will pay you another time; if you are so tame as to take this, go no more to the Ordinary; for then the whole Gang will be ever and anon watching an opportunity to make a *Mouth* of you in the like nature. If you nick them, ‘tis odds, if they wait not your coming out at night and beat you: I could produce you an hundred examples of this kind, but they will rarely adventure on the attempt, unless they are backt with some *Bully-Huffs* and *Bully-Rocks*, with others, whose fortunes are as desperate as their own. We need no other testimony to confirm the danger of associating with these Anthropophagi, or Man-Eaters, than

Lincolns Inn Fields, whilst *Speering's* Ordinary was kept in Bell Yard, and that you do not want a pair of Witnesses for the proof thereof, take in, also, Covent Garden.

“Neither is it the House itself to be exempted; every night, almost, some one or other, who, either heated with Wine, or made cholerick with the loss of his Money, raises a quarrel, swords are drawn, box and candlesticks thrown at one another’s heads. Tables overthrown, and all the House in such a Garboyl, that it is the perfect type of Hell. Happy is the man now that can make the frame of a Table or Chimney corner his Sanctuary; and, if any are so fortunate as to get to the Stair head, they will rather hazard the breaking of their own necks, than have their souls pushed out of their bodies in the dark by they know not whom.

“I once observed one of the *Desperadoes* of the Town, (being half drunk) to press a Gentleman very much to lend him a crown: the Gentleman refus’d him several times, yet, still, the Borrower persisted; and, holding his head too near the *Caster’s* elbow, it chanced to hit his nose: the other, thinking it to be affront enough to be denied the loan of Money, without this slight touch of the nose, drew, and, stepping back, (unawares to the Gentleman) made a full pass at him, intending to have run him through the body; but his drunkenness misguided his hand, so that he ran him only through the arm: this put the house into so great a confusion and fright, that some fled, thinking the Gentleman slain. This wicked Miscreant thought not this sufficient; but,

tripping up his heels, pinn'd him, as he thought to the floor: and after this, takes the Gentleman's silver sword, leaving his in the wound, and, with a *Grand Jury* of *Dammees*, bid all stand off, if they lov'd their lives, and, so, went clear off with sword and liberty, but was, notwithstanding, (the Gentleman recovering) compel'd to make what satisfaction he was capable of making, beside a long imprisonment; and was not long abroad, before he was apprehended for Burglary committed, condemned, and justly executed.

“But, to proceed on as to play: late at night, when the company grows thin, and your eyes dim with watching, false Dice are frequently put upon the ignorant, or they are otherwise cheated by *Topping*, *Slurring*, *Stabbing*, &c., and, if you be not vigilant and careful, the box-keeper shall score you up double, or treble Boxes; and, though you have lost your money, dun you as severely for it, as if it were the justest debt in the world.

“The more subtile and genteeler sort of *Rooks*, you shall not distinguish, by their outward demeanour, from persons of condition; these will sit by, a whole evening, and observe who wins; if the winner be *bubbleable*, they will insinuate themselves into his company, by applauding his success, advising him to leave off while he is well: and, lastly, by civilly inviting him to drink a glass of wine, where, having well warm'd themselves to make him more than half drunk, they wheadle him in to play: to which, if he condescend, he shall quickly have no money left him in his pocket, unless, perchance, a Crown the Rooking winner

lent him, in courtesie, to bear his charges homewards.

“This they do by false Dice, as *High Fullams*, 4. 5. 6. *Low Fullams*, 1. 2. 3. By *Bristle Dice*, which are fitted for their purpose by sticking a Hog’s bristle, so in the corners, or otherwise in the Dice, that they shall run high, or low, as they please. This bristle must be strong and short, by which means, the bristle bending, it will not lie on that side, but will be tript over; and this is the newest way of making a high, or low *Fullam*. The old ways are by drilling them, and loading them with quicksilver; but that cheat may be easily discovered by their weight, or holding two corners between your forefinger and thumb; if, holding them so, gently between your fingers, they turn, you may conclude them false: or, you may try their falsehood otherwise, by breaking, or splitting them. Others have made them by filing and rounding; but all these ways fall short of the Art of those who make them; some whereof are so admirably skilful in making a Bale of Dice to run what you would have them, that your Gamesters think they can never give enough for their purchase, if they prove right. They are sold in many places about the Town; price current, (by the help of a friend) eight shillings; whereas an ordinary Bale is sold for sixpence: for my part, I shall tell you plainly, I would have those Bales of false Dice to be sold at the price of the ears of such destructive knaves that made them.

“Another way the Rook hath to cheat, is first by *Palming*, that is, he puts one Dye into the Box, and keeps the other in the hollow of his little finger; which, noting what is uppermost when

he takes him up, the same shall be when he throws the other Dye, which runs doubtfully, any cast. Observe this – that the bottom and top of all Dice are *Seven*, so that if it be four above, it must be a 3 at bottom; so 5 and 2, 6 and 1. Secondly, by *Topping*, and that is when they take up both Dice, and seem to put them in the Box; and, shaking the Box, you would think them both there, by reason of the rattling occasioned with the screwing of the Box; whereas, one of them is at the top of the box, between his two forefingers, or secur'd by thrusting a forefinger into the Box. Thirdly, by *Slurring*: that is, by taking up your Dice as you will have them advantageously lie in your hand, placing the one a top the other, not caring if the uppermost run a Millstone, (as they used to say) if the undermost run without turning, and, therefore, a smooth table is altogether requisite for this purpose: on a rugged rough board, it is a hard matter to be done, whereas, on a smooth table (the best are rub'd over with Bee's Wax to fill up all chinks and crevices) it is usual for some to slur a Dye two yards, or more, without turning. Fourthly – by *Knapping*: that is, when you strike a Dye dead, that it shall not stir. This is best done within the Tables; where, note, there is no securing but of one Dye, although there are some, who boast of securing both. I have seen some so dexterous at Knapping, that they have done it through the handle of a quart-pot, or, over a Candle and Candlestick: but that which I most admired, was throwing the same, less than Ames Ace, with two Dice, upon a Groat held in the left hand, on the one side of the handle, a foot distance, and

the Dice thrown with the right hand on the other.

“Lastly – by *Stabbing*– that is, having a Smooth Box, and small in the bottom, you drop in both your Dice in such manner as you would have them sticking therein, by reason of its narrowness, the Dice lying upon one another; so that, turning up the Box, the Dice never tumble; if a smooth Box, if true, but little; by which means you have bottoms according to the tops you put in; for example – if you put in your Dice so that two fives or two fours lie a top, you have, in the bottom, turned up two twos, or two treys; so, if Six and Ace a top, a Six and an Ace at bottom.”

At this time were played several games requiring tables and dice, such as *Irish*; *Backgammon*; *Tick-tack*; *Doublets*; *Sice-Ace* and *Catch-Dolt*; whilst the games requiring no special tables were *In and In*; *Passage* and *Hazard*, which latter was the game most usually played, and of which Cotton remarks “Certainly, Hazard is the most bewitching game that is played on the Dice; for when a man begins to play, he knows not when to leave off; and, having once accustomed himself to play at Hazard, he hardly, ever after, minds anything else.”

Ned Ward<sup>8</sup> (1663-1714), of course, mentions gamblers and gambling, but his experiences are of low Coffee Houses and Alsatia: and, presumably most of the Gambling Houses were of that type, for Thomas Brown<sup>9</sup> (1663-1704) speaks of them as follows. “In some places they call Gaming Houses *Academies*;

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<sup>8</sup> The London Spy.

<sup>9</sup> The Works of Mr Thomas Brown, edit. 1705.

but I know not why they should inherit that honourable name, since there is nothing to be learn'd there, unless it be *Sleight of Hand*, which is sometimes at the Expence of all our Money, to get that of other Men's by Fraud and Cunning. The Persons that meet are generally Men of an *Infamous* character, and are in various Shapes, Habits, and Employments. Sometimes they are Squires of the *Pad*, and now and then borrow a little Money upon the *King's High Way*, to recruit their losses at the *Gaming House*; and, when a Hue and Cry is out to apprehend them, they are as safe in one of these Houses as a *Priest* at the *Altar*, and practise the old trade of *Cross-biting Cullies*, assisting the frail *Square Die* with high and low *Fullams*, and other napping tricks, in comparison of whom the common Bulkers and Pickpockets, are a very honest society. How unaccountable is this way to *Beggary*, that when a man has but a little money, or knows not where in the world to compass any more, unless by hazarding his neck for't, will try an experiment to leave himself none at all: or, he that has money of his own should play the fool, and try whether it shall not be another man's. Was ever anything so nonsensically pleasant?

“One idle day I ventured into one of these *Gaming Houses*, where I found an *Oglio of Rakes* of several Humours and Conditions met together. Some of them had never a Penny left them to bless their Heads with. One that had play'd away even his Shirt and Cravat, and all his Clothes but his Breeches, stood shivering in a Corner of the Room, and another comforting him, and saying, *Damme Jack*, whoever thought to see thee in a State

of Innocency: cheer up, Nakedness is the best Receipt in the World against a Fever; and then fell a Ranting as if Hell had broke loose that very Moment. . . I told my friend, instead of *Academies* these places should be called *Cheating Houses*: Whereupon a Bully of the *Blade* came strutting up to my very Nose, in such a Fury, that I would willingly have given half the Teeth in my Head for a Composition, crying out, Split my Wind Pipe, Sir, you are a Fool, and don't understand *Trap*, the whole World's a Cheat."

In the reigns of Charles II., James II., William III., and Queen Anne were many notorious gamblers, such as Count Konigsmarck, St Evremont, Beau Fielding, Col. Macartney, who was Lord Mohun's second in his celebrated duel with the Duke of Hamilton, and the Marquis de Guiscard, who stabbed Harley, Earl of Oxford. There is a little book by Theophilus Lucas,<sup>10</sup> which gives a more or less accurate life of notorious gamblers of those days; amongst them there is a notice of Col. Panton, of whom Lucas says: "There was no Game but what he was an absolute Artist at, either upon the Square, or foul Play: as at *English Ruff and Honours*, *Whist*, *French Ruff*, *Gleek*, *L'Ombre*, *Lanterloo*, *Bankafalet*, *Beast*, *Basset*, *Brag*, *Piquet*: he was very dextrous also at *Verquere*, *Tick-tack*, *Grand Trick-track*, *Irish* and *Back-Gammon*; which are all Games play'd within Tables; and he was not Ignorant of *Inn and Inn*, *Passage* and *Draughts*, which

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<sup>10</sup> "Memoirs of the Lives, Intrigues, and Comical Adventures of the most Famous Gamesters and Celebrated Sharpers in the Reigns of Charles II., James II., William III., and Queen Anne," by Theophilus Lucas, Esq. London, 1714. 8vo.



are Games play'd without the Tables. Moreover, he had great skill at *Billiards* and *Chess*; but, above all, his chief game was at *Hazard*, at which he got the most Money; for, in one Night, at this Play, he won as many thousand pounds as purchased him an Estate of above £1500 *per Annum*, insomuch as he built a whole Street near *Leicester-fields*, which, after his own name, he called *Panton Street*. After this good Fortune, he had such an Aversion against all manner of Games, that he would never handle Cards nor Dice again, but liv'd very handsomely on his Winnings to his dying Day, which was in the year 1681."

Perhaps the most amusing of Lucas's *Lives* is that of Richard Bouchier – about whom I extract the following anecdotes. "Fortune not favouring Mr *Bouchier* always alike, he was reduced to such a very low Ebb, that, before he was Four-and-twenty, he was obliged to be a Footman to the Right Honourable the Earl of *Mulgrave*, now Duke of *Buckingham*; in this Nobleman's Service he wore a Livery above a year and a half, when, by his genteel Carriage and Mien, marrying one Mrs *Elizabeth* Gossinn, a Lace Woman's Grand Daughter, in *Exeter Change* in the *Strand*, with whom he had about 150 Pounds; it being then the solemn Festival of *Christmas*, in the Twelve Days whereof, great Raffling was then wont to be kept in the *Temple*, he carried his Wife's Portion thither to improve it, but was so unsuccessful as to lose every Farthing. This ill Luck made Mr *Bouchier* Stark Mad; but, borrowing 20 Pounds of a Friend, he went to the *Temple* again, but had first bought a Twopenny Cord

to hang himself, in case he lost that too: but the Dice turning on his side, and having won his own Money back again, and as much more to it, of one particular Gentleman who was now fretting and fuming in as bad manner as *Bourchier* was before, he very courteously pull'd the cord out of his pocket, and giving it to the Loser, said, *Having now, Sir, no occasion for this Implement myself, it is at your Service with all my Heart*: Which bantering expression made the Gentleman look very sour upon the Winner, who carried off his booty whilst he was well."

He grew prosperous, and got into high society, as bookmakers and others now do at Horse Races; for we find that "being at the *Groom Porter's*, he flung one Main with the Earl of *Mulgrave* for £500, which he won; and his Honour, looking wistly at him, quoth he: *I believe I should know you*. Yes, (replied the winner), *your Lordship must have some knowledge of me, for my Name is Dick Bourchier, who was once your Footman*. Whereupon, his Lordship, supposing that he was not in a Capacity of paying 500 pounds in case he had lost, cry'd out, *A Bite, A Bite*. But the *Groom Porter* assuring his Honour that Mr *Bourchier* was able to have paid 1000 pounds, provided his Lordship had won such a sum, he paid him what he plaid for, without any farther Scruple."

But he was not content to gamble with mere Earls, he flew at higher game. "By the favour of some of his own Nation, he was soon admitted to the presence of *Lewis le grand*, as a Gamster: he not only won 15,000 Pistoles of the King, but the Nobility also tasted of the same Fortune; for he won 10,000

Pistoles of the Duke of *Orleans*; almost as much of the Duke *D'Espernon*, besides many of his jewels, and a prodigious large piece of Ambergreese, valued at 20,000 crowns, as being the greatest piece that ever was seen in *Europe*, and which was afterwards laid up by the Republick of *Venice* in their treasury, to whom it was sold for a great Rarity... Once, Mr *Bourchier* going over to *Flanders*, with a great Train of Servants, set off in such a fine Equipage, that they drew the Eyes of all upon them wherever they went, to admire the Splendor and Gaiety of their Master, whom they took for no less than a Nobleman of the first Rank. In this Pomp, making his Tour at King *William's* Tent, he happened into Play with that great Monarch, and won of him above £2500. The Duke of *Bavaria* being also there, he then took up the cudgels, and losing £15,000, the Loss put him into a great Chafe, and doubting some foul Play was put upon him, because Luck went so much against him, quoth Mr *Bourchier*—*Sir, if you have any suspicion of any sinister trick put upon your Highness, if you please, I'll give you a Chance for all your Money at once, tossing up at Cross and Pile,<sup>11</sup> and you shall have the advantage of throwing up the Guinea yourself.* The Elector admir'd at his bold Challenge, which, nevertheless, accepting, he tost up for £15,000, and lost the Money upon Reputation, with which *Bourchier* was very well satisfied, as not doubting in the least; and so, taking his leave of the King and those Noblemen that were with him, he departed. Then the

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<sup>11</sup> The same as our Heads and Tails.

Elector of *Bavaria*, enquiring of his Majesty, who that Person was, that could run the Hazard of playing for so much Money at a Time, he told him it was a subject of his in *England*, that though he had no real estate of his own, yet was he able to play with any Sovereign Prince in *Germany*. Shortly after, *Bourchier* returning into England, he bought a most rich Coach and curious Sett of six Horses to it, which cost him above £3000, for a present to the Elector of *Bavaria*, who had not yet paid him anything of the £30,000 which he had won of him. Notice hereof being sent to his Highness, the generous action incited him to send over his Gentleman of Horse, into *England*, to take care of this present, which he received kindly at *Bourchier's* Hands, to whom he return'd Bills of Exchange also, drawn upon several eminent merchants in *London*, for paying what money he had lost with him at play."

*Bourchier* became very rich by gambling, and purchased an estate near Pershore in Worcestershire, where he was buried – but he died in London in 1702, aged 45.

Lucas tells a story about gamblers, which, although it has no reference to England, is too good to leave out.

"But, for a farther unquestionable Testimony of the Mischiefs that often arise from Gaming, this is a very remarkable, but dreadful Passage, which I am now going to recite. Near *Bellizona*, in *Switzerland*, Three Men were playing at Dice on the *Sabbath Day*; and one of 'em, call'd *Ulrick Schroæteus*, having lost his Money, and, at last, expecting a good Cast, broke out into a most

blasphemous Speech, threatening, *That, if Fortune deceiv'd him then, he would thrust his Dagger into the very body of God, as far as he could.* The cast miscarrying, the Villain drew his Dagger, and threw it against Heaven with all his Strength; when, behold, the Dagger vanish'd, and several Drops of Blood fell upon the table in the midst of them: and the Devil immediately came and carry'd away the blasphemous Wretch, with such a Noise and Stink, that the whole City was amaz'd at it. The others, half distracted with Fear, strove to wipe out the Drops of Blood that were upon the Table, but the more they rubb'd 'em, the more plainly they appear'd. The Rumour hereof flying to the City, multitudes of People flock'd to the Place, where they found the Gamesters washing the Board; whom they bound in Chains, and carried towards the Prison; but, as they were upon the way, one of 'em was suddenly struck dead, with such a Number of Lice crawling out of him, as was wonderful and loathsome to behold: And the Third was immediately put to Death by the Citizens, to avert the Divine Indignation and Vengeance, which seem'd to hang over their heads. The Table was preserv'd in the Place, and kept as a Monument of the Judgments of God on Blasphemers and Sabbath-breakers; and to show the mischiefs and inconveniences that often attend Gaming."

Loaded Dice continued to be used – for on 18th April 1740 were committed to Newgate, on the oaths of seven gentlemen of distinction, Thomas Lyell, Lawrence Sydney, and John Roberts, for cheating and defrauding with false and loaded dice, those

particular gentlemen, at the Masquerade, to the value of about £400, and other gentlemen not present at the examination of about £4000 more; and out of about nine pairs of dice which were cut asunder, only one single dice was found unloaded. For this, Lyell and Sidney stood in the Pillory, near the Opera House, on 2nd June 1742, two years after the offence was committed.

And two days afterwards, a cause was tried in the Court of King's Bench, on an indictment against a gentleman for winning the sum of £500 at hazard about seven years before; and, after a long trial, the jury found him guilty, the penalty being £2500.

To show the prevalence of dicing, it may be mentioned that when the floors of the Middle Temple Hall were taken up somewhere about 1764, among other things were found nearly one hundred pairs of dice which had fallen through the chinks of the flooring. They were about one-third smaller than those now in use. And Malcolm<sup>12</sup> says: "However unpleasant the yells of barrow women with their commodities are at present, no other mischief arises from them than the obstruction of the ways. It was far otherwise before 1716 when they generally carried Dice with them, and children were enticed to throw for fruit and nuts, or, indeed, any persons of a more advanced age. However, in the year just mentioned, the Lord Mayor issued an order to apprehend all retailers so offending, which speedily put an end to street gaming; though I am sorry to observe that some miscreants

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<sup>12</sup> Anecdotes of the "Manners and Customs of London during the 18th Century," by J. P. Malcolm. Lon. 1808. 4to.

now (1808) carry little wheels marked with numbers, which, being turned, govern the chance by the figure a hand in the centre points to when stopped.” When I was young the itinerent vendors of sweets had a “dolly,” which was a rude representation of a man, hollowed spirally; a marble was dropped in at its head, and coming out at its toes, spun round a board until it finally subsided into one of the numerous numbered hollows it contained. When that was made illegal, a numbered teetotum was used, and now childhood is beguiled with the promise of a threepenny piece, or other prize, to be found in packets of sweets.

# CHAPTER I

Latimer and Cards – Discourse between a Preacher and a Professor – The Perpetual Almanack, or Soldier's Prayer Book – Origin of Playing Cards – Earliest Notice – Royal Card Playing.

Before going into the history, &c., of playing cards, it may be as well to note the serious application that was made of them by some persons: and first, we will glance at the two sermons of Latimer's on cards, which he delivered in St Edward's Church, Cambridge, on the Sunday before Christmas Day 1529. In these sermons he used the card playing of the season for illustrations of spiritual truth. By having recourse to a series of similes, drawn from the rules of Primero and Trump, he illustrated his subject in a manner that for some weeks after caused his pithy sentences to be recalled at well nigh every social gathering; and his Card Sermons became the talk both of Town and University. The novelty of his method of treatment made it a complete success; and it was felt throughout the University that his shafts had told with more than ordinary effect. But, of course, these sermons being preached in pre-Reformation days, were considered somewhat heretical, and Buckenham, the Prior of the Dominicans at Cambridge, tried to answer Latimer in the same view. As Latimer derived his illustrations from Cards, so did



Buckenham from Dice, and he instructed his hearers how they might confound Lutheranism by throwing quatre and cinque: the quatre being the “four doctors” of the Church, and the cinque being five passages from the New Testament selected by the preacher.

Says Latimer in the first of these sermons: “Now then, what is Christ’s rule? Christ’s rule consisteth in many things, as in the Commandments, and the Works of Mercy and so forth. And for because I cannot declare Christ’s rule unto you at one time, as it ought to be done, I will apply myself according to your custom at this time of Christmas. I will, as I said, declare unto you Christ’s rule, but that shall be in Christ’s Cards. And, whereas you are wont to celebrate Christmas by playing at Cards, I intend, by God’s grace to deal unto you Christ’s Cards, wherein you shall perceive Christ’s rule. The game that we will play at shall be called The Triumph, which, if it be well played at, he that dealeth shall win; the players shall likewise win; and the standers and lookers on shall do the same; insomuch that no man that is willing to play at this Triumph with these Cards, but they shall be all winners, and no losers.”

Next, is a curious little Black Letter tract, by James Balmford published in 1593.<sup>13</sup> It is a dialogue between a Professor and a Preacher.

*“Professor.* Sir, howsoever I am perswaded by that which

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<sup>13</sup> A Short and Plaine Dialogue concerning the unlawfulness of playing at Cards, or Tables, or any other Game consisting in Chance.

I reade in the common places of *Peter Martyr*, par. 2, pag. 525, b. that Dice condemned both by the Civill lawes (and by the Fathers), are therefore unlawfull, because they depend upon chance; yet not satisfied with that which he writeth of Table playing, pag. 516, b. I would crave your opinion concerning playing at Tables and Cards.

*Preacher.* Saving the judgement of so excellent a Divine, so Farre as I can learne out of God's word, Cardes and Tables seeme to mee no more lawfull, (though less offensive) than Dice. For Table playing is no whit the more lawfull, because *Plato* compares the life of man thereunto, than a theefe is the more justifiable, because Christ compareth his second coming to burglarie in the night (Mat. xxiv. 43, 44). Againe, if Dice be wholly evill, because they wholly depend upon chance, then Tables and Cardes must needs be somewhat evill, because they somewhat depend upon chance. Therefore, consider well this reason, which condemneth the one as well as the other: Lots are not to be used in sport; but games consisting in chance, as Dice, Cardes, Tables, are Lots; therefore not to be used in sport.

*Professor.* For my better instruction, prove that Lots are not to be used in sport.

*Preacher.* Consider with regard these three things: First, that we reade not in the Scriptures that Lots were used, but only in serious matters, both by the Jewes and Gentiles. Secondly, that a Lot, in the nature thereof doth as necessarily suppose the special providence and determining presence of God, as an oth in

the nature thereof doth suppose the testifying presence of God. Yea, so that, as in an oth, so in a lot, prayer is expressed, or to bee understoode (I Sam. xiv. 41). Thirdly, that the proper end of a Lot, as of an oth (Heb. vi. 16) is to end a controversie: and, therefore, for your better instruction, examine these reasons. Whatsoever directly, or of itselfe, or in a speciall manner, tendeth to the advancing of the name of God, is to be used religiously, and not to be used in sport, as we are not to pray or sweare in sport: but the use of Lots, directly of itselfe, and in a speciall manner, tendeth to the advancing of the name of God, in attributing to His speciall Providence in the whole and immediate disposing of the Lot, and expecting the event (Pro. xvi. 33; Acts i. 24, 26). Therefore the use of Lots is not to be in sport. Againe, we are not to tempte the Almighty by a vaine desire of manifestation of his power and speciall providence (Psal. lxxviii. 18, 19; Esa. vii. 12; Matth. iv. 6, 7). But, by using Lots in sport, we tempt the Almighty, vainly desiring the manifestation of his speciall providence in his immediate disposing. Lastly, whatsoever God hath sanctified to a proper end, is not to be perverted to a worse (Matth. xxi. 12, 13). But God hath sanctified Lots to a proper end, namely to end controversies (Num. xxvi. 55; Pro. xviii. 18), therefore man is not to pervert them to a worse, namely to play, and, by playing, to get away another man's money, which, without controversie, is his owne. For the common saying is, *Sine lucro friget lusus*, no gaining, cold gaming.

*Professor.* God hath sanctified Psalmes to the praise of his

name, and bread and wine to represent the bodie and blood of our crucified Saviour, which be holie ends; and the children of God may sing Psalmes to make themselves merie in the Lord, and feede upon bread and wine, not only from necessitie, but to cheere themselves; why, then, may not God's children recreate themselves by lotterie, notwithstanding God hath sanctified the same to end a controversie?

*Preacher.* Because we finde not in the Scriptures any dispensation for recreation by lotterie, as we do for godlie mirth by singing (Jam. v. 13), and for religious and sober cheering ourselves by eating and drinking (Deut. viii. 9, 10). And, therefore, (it being withall considered that the ends you speake of, be not proper, though holy) it followeth, that God who only disposeth the Lot touching the event, and is, therefore, a principall actor, is not to bee set on worke by lotterie in any case, but when hee dispenseth with us, or gives us leave so to doe. But dispensation for recreation by lotterie cannot be shewed.

*Professor.* Lots may be used for profit in a matter of right (Num. xxvi. 55), why not, for pleasure?

*Preacher.* Then othes may be used for pleasure, for they may for profit, in a matter of truth (Exod. xxii. 8, 11). But, indeede, lots, (as othes) are not to be used for profit or pleasure, but only to end a controversie.

*Professor.* The wit is exercised by Tables and Cards, therefore they be no lots.

*Preacher.* Yet Lotterie is used by casting Dice, and by shuffling

and cutting, before the wit is exercised. But how doth this follow? Because Cards and Tables be not naked Lots, consisting only in chance (as Dice) they are, therefore, no lots at all. Although (being used without cogging, or packing) they consist principally in chance, from whence they are to receive denomination. In which respect, a Lot is called in Latin, *Sors*, that is, chance or hazard. And *Lyra* upon Pro. xvi. saith, To use Lots, is, by a variable event of some sensible thing, to determine some doubtfull or uncertaine matter, as to draw cuts, or to cast Dice. But, whether you will call Cards and Tables, Lots, or no, you play with chance, or use Lotterie. Then, consider whether exercise of wit doth sanctifie playing with lotterie, or playing with lotterie make such exercising of wit a sinne (Hag. ii. 13, 14). For as calling God to witness by vaine swearing, is a sinne, (2 Cor. i. 13) so making God an umpire, by playing with lotterie, must needs be a sinne; yea, such a sin as maketh the offender (in some respects) more blame worthe. For there be moe occasions of swearing than of lotterie. Secondly, vaine othes most commonly slip out unawares, whereas lots cannot be used but with deliberation. Thirdly, swearing is to satisfie other, whereas this kind of lotterie is altogether to fulfil our own lusts. Therefore, take heede, that you be not guiltie of perverting the ordinance of the Lord, of taking the name of God in vaine, and of tempting the Almighty, by a gamesome putting off things to hazard, and making play of lotterie, except you thinke that God hath no government in vaine actions, or hath dispensed with such

lewd games.

*Professor.* In shooting, there is a chance, by a sudden blast, yet shooting is no lotterie.

*Preacher.* It is true; for chance commeth by accident, and not of the nature of the game, to be used.

*Professor.* Lots are secret, and the whole disposing of them is of God (Pro. xvi. 33); but it is otherwise in tables and Cards.

*Preacher.* Lots are cast into the lap by man, and that openly, lest conveiance should be suspected; but the disposing of the chance is secret, that it may be chance indeed, and wholly of God, who directeth all things (Prov. xvi. 13, 9, 33). So in Tables, man by faire casting Dice truly made, and in Cards, by shuffling and cutting, doth openly dispose the Dice and Cards so, as whereby a variable event may follow; but it is only and immediately of God that the Dice bee so cast, and the Cards so shuffled and cut, as that this or that game followeth, except there be cogging and packing. So that, in faire play, man's wit is not exercised in disposing the chance, but in making the best of it, being past.

*Professor.* The end of our play is recreation, and not to make God an umpire; but recreation (no doubt) is lawfull.

*Preacher.* It may be the souldiers had no such end when they cast lots for Christ his coate (Mat. xxvii. 25), but this should be your end when you use lotterie, as the end of an oth should be, to call God to witnesse. Therefore, as swearing, so lotterie, without due respect, is sinne. Againe, howsoever recreation be

your pretended end, yet, remember that wee must not doe evill that good may come of it (Rom. iii. 8). And that therefore we are to recreate ourselves by lawfull recreations. Then see how Cardes and Tables be lawfull.

*Professor.* If they be not abused by swearing or brawling, playing for too long time, or too much money.

*Preacher.* Though I am perswaded that it is not lawfull to play for any money, considering that thanks cannot be given in faith for that which is so gotten (Deut. xxiii. 18, Esa. lxi. 8) Gamesters worke not with their hands the thing that is good, to be free from stealing (Ephe. iv. 28), and the loser hath not answerable benefit for his money so lost (Gen. xxix. 15) contrary to that equitie which Aristotle, by the light of nature hath taught long since; yet I grant, if Cards and Tables, so used as you speak, be lesse sinfull, but how they bee lawfull I see not yet.

*Professor.* Good men, and well learned, use them.

*Preacher.* We must live by precept, not by examples, except they be undoubtedly good. Therefore, examine whether they bee good and well learned in doing so, or no. For every man may erre (Ro. iii. 4).

*Professor.* It is not good to be too just, or too wise (Eccl. vii. 18).

*Preacher.* It is not good to be too wise, or too foolish, in despising the word of God (Prov. i. 22) and not regarding the weaknesse of other (Rom. xiv. 21). Let us therefore beware that we love not pleasure more than godlinesse (2 Tim. iii. 4)."

The following broadside, which was bought in the streets, about 1850, is a copy of one which appeared in the newspapers about the year 1744, when it was entitled “Cards Spiritualized.” The name of the soldier is there stated to be one Richard Middleton, who attended divine service, at a church in Glasgow, with the rest of the regiment.

## **“The Perpetual Almanack, or Soldier’s Prayer Book**

giving an Account of Richard Lane, a Private belonging to the 47th Regiment of Foot, who was taken before the Mayor of the Town for Playing at Cards during Divine Service.

The Sergeant commanded the Soldiers at Church, and when the Parson had read the prayers, he took his text. Those who had a Bible, took it out, but the Soldier had neither Bible nor Common Prayer Book, but, pulling out a Pack of Cards he spread them before him. He, first, looked at one card, and then at another: the Sergeant of the Company saw him, and said, ‘Richard, put up the Cards, this is not the place for them.’ ‘Never mind that,’ said Richard. When the service was over, the Constable took Richard prisoner, and brought him before the Mayor. ‘Well,’ says the Mayor, ‘what have you brought that Soldier here for?’ ‘For playing Cards in church.’ ‘Well, Soldier, what have you to say for yourself?’ ‘Much, I hope, Sir.’ ‘Very good; if not, I will punish you more than ever man was punished.’ ‘I have been,’ said the Soldier, ‘about six weeks on the march. I have had but little to subsist



on. I have neither Bible, nor Prayer Book – I have nothing but a Pack of Cards, and I hope to satisfy your Worship of the purity of my intentions.’ ‘Very good,’ said the Mayor. Then, spreading the cards before the Mayor, he began with the Ace.

‘When I see the Ace, it reminds me that there is only one God.

When I see the Deuce, it reminds me of the Father and the Son.

When I see the Tray, it reminds me of Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

When I see the Four, it reminds me of the four Evangelists that preached, viz., Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

When I see the Five, it reminds me of the Five Wise Virgins that trimmed their lamps. There were ten, but five were wise, and five foolish, who were shut out.

When I see the Six, it reminds me that in Six days the Lord made Heaven and Earth.

When I see the Seven, it reminds me that on the seventh day God rested from the works which he had made, and hallowed it.

When I see the Eight, it reminds me of the eight righteous persons that were saved when God drowned the world, viz., Noah and his wife, his three sons and their wives.

When I see the Nine, it reminds me of the nine lepers that were cleansed by our Saviour. There were ten, but nine never returned God thanks.

When I see the Ten, it reminds me of the Ten Commandments, which God handed down to Moses, on a table

of stone.

When I see the King, it reminds me of the Great King of Heaven, which is God Almighty.

When I see the Queen, it reminds me of the Queen of Sheba, who went to hear the wisdom of Solomon; for she was as wise a woman as he was a man. She brought with her fifty boys and fifty girls, all dressed in boy's apparel for King Solomon to tell which were boys, and which were girls. King Solomon sent for water for them to wash themselves; the girls washed to the elbows, and the boys only to the wrist, so King Solomon told by that.'

'Well,' said the Mayor, 'you have given a description of all the Cards in the pack, except one.' 'Which is that?' said the Soldier. 'The Knave,' said the Mayor. 'I will give your honour a description of that, too, if you will not be angry.' 'I will not,' said the Mayor, 'if you will not term me to be the Knave.' 'Well,' said the Soldier, 'the greatest knave I know, is the constable that brought me here.' 'I do not know,' said the Mayor, 'whether he is the greatest knave, but I know he is the greatest fool.'

'When I count how many spots there are in a pack of cards, I find 365, as many days as there are in a year.'<sup>14</sup>

When I count the number of cards in a pack, I find there are 52, as many weeks as there are in a year.

When I count the tricks at Cards, I find 13, as many months as there are in a year. So you see, Sir, the Pack of Cards serves for a Bible, Almanack, and Common Prayer Book to me.'

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<sup>14</sup> I fail to see how this is made out. – J. A.

The Mayor called for some bread and beef for the Soldier, gave him some money, and told him to go about his business, saying that he was the cleverest man he ever heard in his life.”

The origin of Playing Cards is involved in mystery, although the Chinese claim to have invented them, saying that the Tien-Tsze, pae, or dotted cards, now in use, were invented in the reign of Leun-ho, a. d. 1120, for the amusement of his wives; and that they were in common use in the reign of Kaow-Tsung, who ascended the throne a. d. 1131. The generally received opinion is that they are of Oriental extraction, and that they were brought into Europe by the gipsies, and were first used in Spain. How, or when they were introduced into England, is not known. In Anstis's *History of the Order of the Garter*, vol. i., p. 307, is to be found the earliest mention of Cards, if, indeed, the Four Kings there mentioned are connected with Cards. The date would be 1278.

“This Enquiry touching the Title of Kings, calls to remembrance the Plays forbidden the Clergy, denominated *Ludos de Rege et Regina*, which might be *Cards*, *Chesse*, or the Game since used even to this Age at *Christmas*, called *Questions and Commands*, and also that Edward I. plaid *ad quatuor Reges* (Wardrobe Rolls, 6 Ed. I, *Waltero Storton ad opus Regis ad ludendum ad Quatuor Reges* viii. s. v. d.) which the Collector guesses might be the Game of Cards, wherein are Kings of the four Suits; for he conceives this Play of some Antiquity, because the term *Knave*, representing a Youth, is given to the next Card in

Consequence to the King and Queen, and is as it were the Son of them, for, in this Sense this Word, Knave, was heretofore used; thus *Chaucer* saith, That *Alla*, King of *Northumberland* begot a Knave Child.”

The Hon. Daines Barrington, in a paper read by him to the Society of Antiquaries, Feb. 23, 1786, after quoting Anstis, went on to say that “Edward the First (when Prince of Wales) served nearly five years in Syria, and, therefore, whilst military operations were suspended, must, naturally, have wished for some sedentary amusements. Now the Asiatics scarcely ever change their customs; and, as they play at Cards (though, in many respects, different from ours), it is not improbable that Edward might have been taught the game, *ad quatuor reges*, whilst he continued so long in this part of the globe.

“If, however, this article in the Wardrobe account is not allowed to allude to *playing cards*, the next writer who mentions the more early introduction of them is P. Menestrier, who, from such another article in the Privy purse expences of the Kings of France, says they were provided for Charles VI. by his limner, after that King was deprived of his senses in 1392. The entry is the following: ‘Donné a Jacquemin Gringonneur, Peintre, pour *trois jeux* de Cartes, a or et a diverses couleurs, de plusieurs devises, pour porter vers le dit Seigneur Roi pour son abatement, cinquante six sols Parisis.’”

Still supposing the game of “Four Kings” to have been a game at cards, it seems strange that Chaucer, who was born fifty years

afterwards, should not have made some mention of Cards as a pastime, for, in his *Franklin's Tale*, he only mentions that "They dancen; and they play at ches and tables." The first authentic date we have of playing Cards in England, shows that they had long been in use in 1463, and were manufactured here, for, by an Act of Parliament (3 Edward IV. cap. 4), the *importation* of playing cards was forbidden.

We get an early notice of cards *temp* Richard III. in the Paston letters<sup>15</sup> from Margery Paston to John Paston, 24 Dec. 1484.

### **"To my ryght worschipful husband John Paston**

Ryght worschipful husbond, I recomaund me onto you. Plese it you to wete that I sent your eldest sunne to my Lady Morlee to have Knolage wat sports wer husyd in her hows in Kyrstemesse next folloyng after the decysse of my lord, her husbond; and sche seyde that ther wer non dysgysyngs, ner harpyng, ner syngyn, ner non lowd dysports, but playing at the tabylls and schesse and cards. Sweche dysports sche gave her folkys leve to play and non odyr."

Royalty was occasionally given to gambling, and we find among the private disbursements of Edward the Second such entries as:

"Item. paid to the King himself, to play at cross and pile, by

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<sup>15</sup> Edit. 1875 (Gairdner), vol. iii., p. 314.

the hands of Richard de Meremoth, the receiver of the Treasury, Twelve pence.

Item. paid there to Henry, the King's barber, for money which he lent to the King, to play at cross and pile, Five shillings.

Item. paid there to Peres Barnard, usher of the King's chamber, money which he lent to the King, and which he lost at cross and pile, to Monsieur Robert Wattewylle, Eight pence.

Item. paid to the King himself, to play at cross and pile, by Peres Barnard, two shillings, which the said Peres won of him."

Also Royalty was fond of playing at cards, which, indeed, were popular from the highest to the lowest; and we find that James IV. of Scotland surprised his future bride, Margaret, sister to Henry VIII., when he paid her his first visit, playing at cards.<sup>16</sup> "The Kynge came privily to the said castell (of Newbattle) and entred within the chammer with a small company, where he founde the quene playing at the cardes." And in the Privy purse expenses of Elizabeth of York, queen to Henry VII., we find, under date of 1502: "Item. to the Quenes grace upon the Feest of St Stephen for hure disporte at cardes this Christmas C.s. (100 shillings)." Whilst to show their popularity in this reign, it was enacted in 1494 (11 Hen. VII. c. 2), that no artificer labourer, or servant, shall play at any unlawful game (cards included) but in Christmas.

Shakespeare makes Henry VIII. play at Cards, for in his play of that name (Act v. sc. i.) there occurs, "And left him at

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<sup>16</sup> Leland's *Collectanea*, vol. iii., Appendix, p. 284.

Primero with the Duke of Suffolk”; whilst, in the *Merry Wives of Windsor* (Act iv. sc. 5), Falstaff says, “I never prosper’d since I forswore myself at Primero.” Stow tells us how, in Elizabeth’s time, “from All Hallows eve to the following Candlemas day, there was, among other sports, playing at Cards for counters, nails, and points, in every house, more for pastime than for gain.” When Mary was Princess, in her Privy Purse expenses there are numerous entries of money given her wherewith to play at cards.

## CHAPTER II

Legislation as to Cards – Boy and sheep – Names of old games at Cards – Gambling *temp.* Charles II. – Description of a gaming-house, 1669 – Play at Christmas – The

Groom Porter – Royal gambling discontinued by George III. – Gambling in church.

Legislation about Cards was thought necessary in Henry VIII.'s time, for we see in 33 Hen. VIII., cap. 9, sec. xvi.: "Be it also enacted by the authority aforesaid. That no manner of artificer, or craftsman of any handicraft or occupation, husbandman, apprentice, labourer, servant at husbandry, journeyman, or servant of artificer, mariners, fishermen, watermen, or any serving man, shall from the said feast of the Nativity of *St John Baptist*, play at the tables, tennis, dice, cards, bowls, clash, coyting, logating, or any unlawful game, out of *Christmas*, under the pain of xx s. to be forfeit for every time," &c. – an edict which was somewhat modified by sec. xxii., which provided "In what cases servants may play at dice, cards, tables, bowls, or tennis."

This interference with the amusements of the people did not lead to good results, as Holinshed tells us (1526): "In the moneth of Maie was a proclamation made against all unlawfull games, according to the statute made in this behalfe, and commissions



awarded to every shire for the execution of the same; so that, in all places, tables, dice, cards, and bouls were taken and burnt. Wherefore the people murmured against the cardinall, saieing: that he grudged at everie man's plesure, saving his owne. But this proclamation small time indured. For, when yong men were forbidden bouls and such other games, some fell to drinking, some to feretting of other men's conies, some to stealing of deere in parks and other unthriftinesse."

With the exception of the grumbles of the Elizabethan puritans, such as Stubbes and others, we hear very little of card playing. Taylor, the "Water Poet," in his *Wit and Mirth* gives a little story anent it, and mentions a game now forgotten. "An unhappy boy that kept his father's sheepe in the country, did use to carry a paire<sup>17</sup> of Cards in his pocket, and, meeting with boyes as good as himselfe, would fall to cards at the Cambrian game of whip-her-ginny, or English One and Thirty; at which sport, hee would some dayes lose a sheepe or two: for which, if his father corrected him, hee (in revenge), would drive the sheepe home at night over a narrow bridge, where some of them falling besides the bridge, were drowned in the swift brooke. The old man, being wearied with his ungracious dealing, complained to a Justice, thinking to affright him from doing any more the like. In briefe, before the Justice the youth was brought, where, (using small reverence and lesse manners), the Justice said to him: Sirrah, you are a notable villaine, you play at Cards, and lose your father's

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<sup>17</sup> Pack.

sheepe at One and Thirty. The Boy replied that it was a lye. A lye, quoth the Justice, you saucy knave, dost thou give me the lye? No, qd the boy, I gave thee not the lye, but you told me the lye, for I never lost sheepe at One and Thirty; for, when my game was one and thirty, I alwayes woune. Indeed, said the Justice, thou saist true, but I have another accusation against thee, which is, that you drive your father's sheepe over a narrow bridge where some of them are oftentimes drowned. That's a lye, too, quoth the boy, for those that go over the bridge are well enough, it is only those that fall beside which are drowned: Whereto the Justice said to the boy's father, Old man, why hast thou brought in two false accusations against thy soun, for he never lost sheepe at one and thirty, nor were there any drowned that went over the bridge."

In *Taylor's Motto* the same author names many other games at cards which were then in vogue: —

“The Prodigall's estate, like to a flux,  
The Mercer, Draper, and the Silk-man sucks;  
The Taylor, Millainer, Dogs, Drabs and Dice,  
They trip, or Passage, or the Most at thrice;  
At Irish, Tick tacke, Doublets, Draughts, or Chesse  
He flings his money free with carelesnesse:  
At Novum, Mumchance, mischance (chuse ye which),  
At One and Thirty, or at Poore and Rich,  
Ruffe, Flam, Trump, Noddy, Whisk, Hole, Sant, New Cut,  
Unto the keeping of foure Knaves, he'l put  
His whole estate at Loadum, or at Gleeke,

At Tickle me quickly, he's a merry Greeke,  
At Primefisto, Post and Payre, Primero,  
Maw, Whip-her-ginny, he's a lib'rall Hero:  
At My sow pigg'd; and (Reader, never doubt ye,  
He's skill'd in all games except), Looke about ye.  
Bowles, Shove groate, Tennis, no game comes amiss,  
His purse a purse for anybody is."

Naturally, under the Puritans, card playing was anathema, and we hear nothing about it, if we except the political satire by Henry Nevile, which was published in 1659, the year after Cromwell's death. It is entitled "Shuffling, Cutting, and Dealing in a Game at Picquet: Being acted from the Year 1653 to 1658 by O. P. [Oliver, Protector] and others, with great applause. *Tempora mutantur et nos.*" It is well worth reading, but it is too long for reproduction here.

But, as soon as the King enjoyed his own again, dicing and card playing were rampant, as Pepys tells us. "7 Feb. 1661. Among others Mr Creed and Captain Ferrers tell me the stories of my Lord Duke of Buckingham's and my Lord's falling out at Havre de Grace, at Cards; they two and my Lord St Albans playing. The Duke did, to my Lord's dishonour, often say that he did, in his conscience, know the contrary to what he then said, about the difference at Cards; and so did take up the money that he should have lost to my Lord, which, my Lord resenting, said nothing then, but that he doubted not but there were ways enough to get his money of him. So they parted that night; and my

Lord sent Sir R. Stayner, the next morning, to the Duke, to know whether he did remember what he said last night, and whether he would owne it with his sword and a second; which he said he would, and so both sides agreed. But my Lord St Albans, and the Queen, and Ambassador Montagu did waylay them at their lodgings till the difference was made up, to my Lord's honour; who hath got great reputation thereby."

*"17 Feb. 1667.* This evening, going to the Queene's side,<sup>18</sup> to see the ladies, I did find the Queene, the Duchesse of York, and another or two, at cards, with a room full of great ladies and men, which I was amazed at to see on a Sunday, having not believed it; but, contrarily, flatly denied the same, a little while since, to my cousin Roger Pepys."

*"1 Jan. 1668.* By and by I met with Mr Brisband; and having it in my mind this Christmas to do what I never can remember that I did, go to see the gaming at the Groome-Porter's, I, having, in my coming from the playhouse, stepped into the two Temple halls, and there saw the dirty prentices and idle people playing, wherein I was mistaken in thinking to have seen gentlemen of quality playing there, as I think it was when I was a little child, that one of my father's servants, John Bassum, I think, carried me in his arms thither, where, after staying an hour, they began to play at about eight at night; where, to see how differently one man took his losing from another, one cursing and swearing, and another only muttering and grumbling to himself, a third without any apparent

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<sup>18</sup> Her Majesty's apartments at Whitehall Palace.

discontent at all: to see how the dice will run good luck in one hand for half an hour together, and on another have no good luck at all: to see how easily here, where they play nothing but guinnys, a £100 is won or lost: to see two or three gentlemen come in there drunk, and, putting their stock of gold together, one 22 pieces, the second 4, and the third 5 pieces; and these two play one with another, and forget how much each of them brought, but he that brought the 22 thinks that he brought no more than the rest: to see the different humours of gamesters to change their luck, when it is bad, to shift their places, to alter their manner of throwing, and that with great industry, as if there was anything in it: to see how some old gamesters, that have no money now to spend as formerly, do come and sit and look on, and, among others, Sir Lewes Dives,<sup>19</sup> who was here, and hath been a great gamester in his time: to hear their cursing and damning to no purpose, as one man being to throw a seven, if he could; and, failing to do it after a great many throws, cried he would be damned if ever he flung seven more while he lived, his despair of throwing it being so great, while others did it, as their luck served, almost every throw: to see how persons of the best quality do here sit down, and play with people of any, though meaner; and to see how people in ordinary clothes shall come hither and play away 100, or 2, or 300 guinnys, without any kind of difficulty; and, lastly, to see the formality of the groome-porter, who is their judge of all disputes in play, and all quarrels that may arise therein, and how his under

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<sup>19</sup> Of Bromham, Bedfordshire.

officers are there to observe true play at each table and to give new dice, is a consideration I never could have thought had been in the world had I not seen it. And mighty glad I am that I did see it, and, it may be, will find another evening before Christmas be over, to see it again, when I may stay later, for their heat of play begins not till about eleven or twelve o'clock; which did give me another pretty observation of a man that did win mighty fast when I was there. I think he won £100 at single pieces in a little time. While all the rest envied him his good fortune, he cursed it, saying, it come so early upon me, for this fortune, two hours hence, would be worth something to me, but then I shall have no such luck. This kind of prophane, mad entertainment they give themselves. And so, I, having enough for once, refusing to venture, though Brisband pressed me hard, and tempted me with saying that no man was ever known to lose the first time, the devil being too cunning to discourage a gamester, and he offered, also, to lend me 10 pieces to venture; but I did refuse, and so went away."

We get a good account of the Gaming-house of this period in "The Nicker Nicked; or, the Cheats of Gaming Discovered" (1669), but as it closely resembles Cotton's account of an Ordinary, I only give a portion of it.

"If what has been said, will not make you detest this abominable kind of life; will the almost certain loss of your money do it? I will undertake to demonstrate that it is ten to one you shall be a loser at the year's end, with constant play upon

the square. If, then, twenty persons bring two hundred pounds a piece, which makes four thousand pounds, and resolve to play, for example, three or four hours a day for a year; I will wager the box shall have fifteen hundred pounds of the money, and that eighteen out of the twenty persons shall be losers.

“I have seen (in a lower instance) three persons sit down at Twelvepenny In and In, and each draw forty shillings a piece; and, in little more than two hours, the box has had three pounds of the money; and all the three gamesters have been losers, and laughed at for their indiscretion.

“At an Ordinary, you shall scarce have a night pass without a quarrel, and you must either tamely put up with an affront, or else be engaged in a duel next morning, upon some trifling insignificant occasion, pretended to be a point of honour.

“Most gamesters begin at small game; and, by degrees, if their money, or estates, hold out, they rise to great sums; some have played, first of all, their money, then their rings, coach and horses, even their wearing clothes and perukes; and then, such a farm; and, at last, perhaps, a lordship. You may read, in our histories,<sup>20</sup> how Sir Miles Partridge played at Dice with King Henry the Eighth for Jesus Bells, so called, which were the greatest in England, and hung in a tower of St Paul’s Church; and won them; whereby he brought them to ring in his pocket; but the ropes, afterwards, caught about his neck, for, in Edward the

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<sup>20</sup> Strype’s Stow’s Survey, ed. 1720, Book iii., p. 148.

Sixth's days, he was hanged for some criminal offences.<sup>21</sup>

“Consider how many people have been ruined by play. Sir Arthur Smithouse is yet fresh in memory: he had a fair estate, which in a few years he so lost at play that he died in great want and penury. Since that Mr Ba — , who was a Clerk in the Six Clerks Office, and well cliented, fell to play, and won, by extraordinary fortune, two thousand pieces in ready gold: was not content with that; played on; lost all he had won, and almost all his own estate; sold his place in the office; and, at last marched off to a foreign plantation to begin a new world with the sweat of his brow. For that is commonly the destiny of a decayed gamester, either to go to some foreign plantation, or to be preferred to the dignity of a box-keeper.

“It is not denied, but most gamesters have, at one time or other, a considerable run of winning, but, (such is the infatuation of play) I could never hear of a man that gave over, a winner, (I mean to give over so as never to play again;) I am sure it is a *rara avis*: for if you once ‘break bulk,’ as they phrase it, you are in again for all. Sir Humphrey Foster had lost the greatest part of his estate, and then (playing, it is said, for a dead horse,) did, by happy fortune, recover it again, then gave over, and wisely too.

“If a man has a competent estate of his own, and plays whether himself or another man shall have it, it is extreme folly; if his estate be small, then to hazard the loss even of that and reduce himself to absolute beggary is direct madness. Besides, it has

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<sup>21</sup> For complicity with the Duke of Somerset.



been generally observed, that the loss of one hundred pounds shall do you more prejudice in disquieting your mind than the gain of two hundred pounds shall do you good, were you sure to keep it."

The "Groom Porter" has been more than once mentioned in these pages. He was formerly an officer of the Lord Steward's department of the Royal Household. When the office was first appointed is unknown, but Henry Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel, Lord Chamberlain to Henry VIII. from 1526 to 1530, compiled a book containing the duties of the officers, in which is set forth "the roome and service belonging to a groome porter to do." His business was to see the King's lodgings furnished with tables, chairs, stools, firing, rushes for strewing the floors, to provide cards, dice, &c., and to decide disputes arising at dice, cards, bowling, &c. The Groom Porter's is referred to as a place of excessive play in the seventeenth year of the reign of Henry VIII. (1526), when it was directed that the privy chamber shall be "kept honestly," and that it "be not used by frequent and intemperate play, as the Groom Porter's house."

Play at Court was lawful, and encouraged, from Christmas to Epiphany, and this was the Groom Porter's legitimate time. When the King felt disposed, and it was his pleasure to play, it was the etiquette and custom to announce to the company, that "His Majesty was out"; on which intimation all Court ceremony and restraint were set aside, and the sport commenced; and when the Royal Gamester had either lost, or won, to his heart's content,

notice of the Royal pleasure to discontinue the game was, with like formality, announced by intimation that “His Majesty was at home,” whereupon play forthwith ceased, and the etiquette and ceremony of the palace was resumed.

The fact of the Christmas gambling is noted in Jonson’s *Alchemist*—

“He will win you,  
By irresistible luck, within this fortnight  
Enough to buy a barony. This will set him  
Upmost at the Groom Porter’s all the Christmas.”

We saw that Pepys visited the Groom Porter’s at Christmas, so also did Evelyn.

“6 Jan. 1662. This evening, according to custom, his Majesty opened the revels of that night, by throwing the dice himself in the privy chamber, where was a table set on purpose, and lost his £100. (The year before he won £1500.) The ladies, also, played very deep. I came away when the Duke of Ormond had won about £1000, and left them still at passage, cards, &c. At other tables, both there and at the Groom Porter’s, observing the wicked folly and monstrous excess of passion amongst some losers: sorry am I that such a wretched custom as play to that excess should be countenanced in a Court, which ought to be an example of virtue to the rest of the kingdom.”

“8 Jan. 1668. I saw deep and prodigious gaming at the Groom Porter’s, vast heaps of gold squandered away in a vain and

profuse manner. This I looked on as a horrid vice, and unsuitable to a Christian Court.”

In the reign of James II. the Groom Porter’s was still an institution, and so it was in William III.’s time, for we read in *The Flying Post*, No. 573, Jan. 10-13, 1699. “Friday last, being Twelfth-day, the King, according to custom, plaid at the Groom Porter’s; where, we hear, Esqre. Frampton<sup>22</sup> was the greatest gainer.”

In Queen Anne’s time he was still in evidence, as we find in the *London Gazette*, December 6-10, 1705. “Whereas Her Majesty, by her Letters Patent to Thomas Archer, Esqre., constituting him Her Groom Porter, hath given full power to him and such Deputies as he shall appoint to supervise, regulate and authorize (by and under the Rules, Conditions, and Restrictions by the Law prescribed,) all manner of Gaming within this Kingdom. And, whereas, several of Her Majesty’s Subjects, keeping Plays or Games in their Houses, have been lately abused, and had Moneys extorted from them by several ill disposed Persons, contrary to Law. These are, therefore, to give Notice, That no Person whatsoever, not producing his Authority from the said Groom Porter, under Seal of his Office, hath any Power to act anything under the said Patent. And, to the end that all such Persons offending as aforesaid, may be proceeded against according to Law, it is hereby desired, that Notice be given of all such Abuses to the said Groom Porter, or his Deputies, at his Office, at

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<sup>22</sup> Probably Tregonwell Frampton, Keeper of the King’s running horses at Newmarket, a position he held under William III., Anne, and George I. and II.

Mr Stephenson's, a Scrivener's House, over against Old Man's Coffee House, near Whitehall."

We get a glimpse of the Groom Porters of this reign in Mrs Centlivre's play of *The Busy Body*:

"*Sir Geo. Airy*. Oh, I honour Men of the Sword; and I presume this Gentleman is lately come from Spain or Portugal – by his Scars.

"*Marplot*. No, really, Sir George, mine sprung from civil Fury: Happening last night into the Groom porter's – I had a strong inclination to go ten Guineas with a sort of a – sort of a – kind of a Milk Sop, as I thought: a Pox of the Dice, he flung out, and my Pockets being empty, as Charles knows they sometimes are, he prov'd a Surly North Briton, and broke my face for my deficiency."

Both George I. and George the Second played at the Groom Porter's at Christmas. In the first number of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, we read how George II. and his Queen spent their Epiphany. "Wednesday, Jan. 5, 1731. This being Twelfth Day ... their Majesties, the Prince of Wales, and the three eldest Princesses, preceded by the Heralds, &c., went to the Chapel Royal, and heard divine Service. The King and Prince made the Offerings at the Altar, of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh, according to Custom. At night, their Majesties &c. play'd at *Hazard*, for the benefit of the Groom Porter, and 'twas said the King won 600 Guineas, and the Queen 360, Princess Amelia 20, Princess Caroline 10, the Earl of Portmore and the Duke

of Grafton, several thousands.” And we have a similar record in *the Grub Street Journal* under date of 7 Jan., 1736. The Office of Groom Porter was abolished during the reign of George III. probably in 1772, for in the *Annual Register* for that year, under date 6 Jan., it says: “Their Majesties not being accustomed to play at Hazard, ordered a handsome gratuity to the Groom Porter; and orders were given, that, for the future, there be no card playing amongst the servants.”

Card playing was justifiable, and legal, at Christmas. An ordinance for governing the household of the Duke of Clarence, in the reign of Edward IV., forbade all games at dice, cards, or other hazard for money *except during the twelve days at Christmas*. And, again, in the reign of Henry VII., an Act was passed against unlawful games, which expressly forbids artificers, labourers, servants, or apprentices to play at any such, *except at Christmas*: and, at some of the Colleges, Cards are introduced into the Combination Rooms, during the twelve days of Christmas, but never appear there during the remainder of the year.

Kirchmayer<sup>23</sup> gives a curious custom of gambling in church on Christmas day:

“Then comes the day wherein the Lorde  
did bring his birth to passe;

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<sup>23</sup> The Popish Kingdome, or, Reigne of Antichrist, written in Latin Verse by Thomas Naogeorgus, and Englished by Barnabe Googe, 1570.

Whereas at midnight up they rise,  
and every man to Masse.  
The time so holy counted is,  
that divers earnestly  
Do think the waters all to wine  
are changed sodainly;  
In that same house that Christ himselfe  
was borne, and came to light,  
And unto water streight againe  
transformde and altred quight.  
There are beside that mindfully  
the money still do watch  
That first to aultar commes, which then  
they privily do snatch.  
The priestes, least others should it have,  
take oft the same away,  
Whereby they thinke, throughout the yeare  
to have good luck in play,  
And not to lose: then straight at game  
till daylight they do strive,  
To make some pleasant prooffe how well  
their hallowed pence will thrive.  
Three Masses every priest doth sing  
upon that solemne day,  
With offerings unto every one,  
that so the more may play.”

# CHAPTER III

Gambling, early 18th Century – Mrs Centlivre – E. Ward – Steele – Pope – Details of a gaming-house – Grub St. Journal on Gambling – Legislation on gambling – Peeresses as gaming-house keepers – A child played for at cards – Raids on gaming-houses – Fielding.

But to return to the Chronology of Gambling. From the Restoration of Charles II. to the time of Anne, gambling was common; but in the reign of this latter monarch, it either reached a much higher pitch, or else, in that Augustan Age of Literature, we hear more about it. Any way, we only know what we read about it. In the epilogue to Mrs Centlivre's play of *the Gamester*, published in 1705, the audience is thus addressed:

“You Roaring Boys, who know the Midnight Cares  
Of Rattling Tatts,<sup>24</sup> ye Sons of Hopes and Fears;  
Who Labour hard to bring your Ruin on,  
And diligently toil to be undone;  
You're Fortune's sporting Footballs at the best,  
Few are his Joys, and small the Gamester's Rest:  
Suppose then, Fortune only rules the Dice,  
And on the Square you Play; yet, who that's Wise  
Wou'd to the Credit of a Faithless Main

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<sup>24</sup> Cant term for false Dice.

Trust his good Dad's hard-gotten hoarded Gain?  
But, then, such Vultures round a Table wait,  
And, hovering, watch the Bubble's sickly State;  
The young fond Gambler, covetous of more,  
Like *Esop's* Dog, loses his certain Store.  
Then the Spung squeez'd by all, grows dry, – And, now,  
Compleatly Wretched, turns a Sharper too;  
These Fools, for want of Bubbles, too, play Fair,  
And lose to one another on the Square.

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This Itch for Play, has, likewise, fatal been,  
And more than *Cupid*, drawn the Ladies in,  
A Thousand Guineas for *Basset* prevails,  
A Bait when Cash runs low, that seldom fails;  
And, when the Fair One can't the Debt defray,  
In Sterling Coin, does Sterling Beauty pay.”

Ward, in a Satire called *Adam and Eve stript of their furbelows*, published in 1705, has an Article on the Gambling lady of the period, entitled, *Bad Luck to him that has her; Or, The Gaming Lady*, of which the following is a portion:

“When an unfortunate Night has happen'd to empty her Cabinet ... her Jewels are carry'd privately into *Lumbard Street*, and Fortune is to be tempted the next Night with another



Sum borrow'd of my Lady's Goldsmith at the Extortion of a Pawnbroker; and, if that fails, then she sells off her Wardrobe, to the great Grief of her Maids; stretches her Credit amongst those she deals with, pawns her Honour to her Intimates, or makes her Waiting-Woman dive into the Bottom of her Trunk, and lug out her green Net Purse, full of old *Jacobus's*, which she has got in her Time by her Servitude, in Hopes to recover her Losses by a Turn of Fortune, that she may conceal her bad Luck from the Knowledge of her Husband: But she is generally such a Bubble to some Smock fac'd Gamester, who can win her Money first, carry off the Loser in a Hackney Coach, and kiss her into a good humour before he parts with her, that she is generally driven to the last Extremity, and then forc'd to confess all to her forgiving Spouse, who, either thro' his fond Affection, natural Generosity, or Danger of Scandal, supplies her with Money to redeem her Moveables, buy her new Apparel, and to pay her Debts upon Honour, that her Ladyship may be *in Statu quo*; in which Condition she never long continues, but repeats the same Game over and over, to the End of the Chapter: For she is so strangely infatuated with the Itch of Card Playing, that she makes the Devil's Books her very *Practice of Piety*; and, were she at her Parish Church, in the Height of her Devotion, should any Body, in the Interim, but stand at the Church Door, and hold up the *Knave of Clubs*, she would take it to be a Challenge at *Lanctre Loo*; and, starting from her Prayers, would follow her beloved *Pam*, as a deluded Traveller does an *Ignis fatuus*."

No. 120 of *the Guardian* (July 29, 1713), by Steele, is devoted to female Gambling as it was in the time of Queen Anne, and the following is a portion of it:

“Their *Passions* suffer no less by this Practice than their Understandings and Imaginations. What Hope and Fear, Joy and Anger, Sorrow and Discontent break out all at once in a fair Assembly upon So noble an Occasion as that of turning up a Card? Who can consider without a Secret Indignation that all those Affections of the Mind which should be consecrated to their Children, Husbands and Parents, are thus vilely prostituted and thrown away upon a Hand at Loo. For my own part, I cannot but be grieved when I see a fine Woman fretting and bleeding inwardly from such trivial Motives; when I behold the Face of an Angel agitated and discomposed by the Heart of a Fury.

“Our Minds are of such a Make, that they, naturally, give themselves up to every Diversion to which they are much accustomed, and we always find that Play, when followed with Assiduity, engrosses the whole Woman, She quickly grows uneasie in her own Family, takes but little Pleasure in all the domestick, innocent, Endearments of Life, and grows more fond of *Pamm* than of her Husband. My friend *Theophrastus*, the best of Husbands and of Fathers, has often complained to me, with Tears in his Eyes, of the late Hours he is forced to keep, if he would enjoy his Wife’s Conversation. When she returns to me with Joy in her Face, it does not arise, says he, from the Sight of her Husband, but from the good Luck she has had at Cards.

On the contrary, says he, if she has been a Loser, I am doubly a Sufferer by it. She comes home out of humour, is angry with every Body, displeased with all I can do, or say, and, in Reality, for no other Reason but because she has been throwing away my Estate. What charming Bedfellows and Companions for Life, are Men likely to meet with, that chuse their Wives out of such Women of Vogue and Fashion? What a Race of Worthies, what Patriots, what Heroes, must we expect from Mothers of this Make?

“I come, in the next Place, to consider all the ill Consequences which Gaming has on the *Bodies* of our Female Adventurers. It is so ordered that almost everything which corrupts the Soul, decays the Body. The Beauties of the Face and Mind are generally destroyed by the same means. This Consideration should have a particular Weight with the Female World, who were designed to please the Eye, and attract the Regards of the other half of the Species. Now, there is nothing that wears out a fine Face like the Vigils of the Card Table, and those cutting Passions which naturally attend them. Hollow Eyes, haggard Looks, and pale Complexions, are the natural Indications of a Female Gamester. Her Morning Sleeps are not able to repair her Midnight Watchings. I have known a Woman carried off half dead from *Bassette*, and have, many a time grieved to see a Person of Quality gliding by me, in her Chair, at two a Clock in the Morning, and looking like a Spectre amidst a flare of Flambeaux. In short, I never knew a thorough paced Female Gamester hold

her Beauty two Winters together.

“But there is still another Case in which the Body is more endangered than in the former. All Play Debts must be paid in Specie, or by an Equivalent. The Man who plays beyond his Income, pawns his Estate; the Woman must find out something else to Mortgage when her Pin Money is gone. The Husband has his Lands to dispose of, the Wife, her Person.”

Almost all writers of the time note and deplore the gambling propensity of Ladies: and Pope, in his *Rape of the Lock* (Canto III.), gives us a picture of a gambling lady, and a graphic description of the game of *Ombre*, which was played in the afternoon: —

“Meanwhile declining from the Noon of Day,  
The Sun obliquely shoots his burning Ray;  
The hungry Judges soon the Sentence sign,  
And Wretches hang, that Jury-men may Dine;  
The Merchant from th’ *Exchange* returns in Peace,  
And the long Labours of the *Toilette* cease —  
*Belinda* now, whom Thirst of Fame invites,  
Burns to encounter two adventurous Knights,  
At *Ombre* singly to decide their Doom;  
And swells her Breast with Conquests yet to come.  
Strait the three Bands prepare in Arms to join,  
Each Band the number of the Sacred Nine.  
Soon as she spreads her Hand, th’ Aerial Guard  
Descend, and sit on each important Card:  
First, *Ariel* perch’d upon a *Matadore*,

Then each, according to the Rank they bore;  
For *Sylphs*, yet mindful of their ancient Race,  
Are, as when Women, wondrous fond of Place.  
Behold, four *Kings* in Majesty rever'd,  
With hoary Whiskers and a forky Beard;  
And four fair *Queens* whose hands sustain a Flow'r,  
Th' expressive Emblem of their softer Pow'r;  
Four *Knave*s in Garbs succinct, a trusty Band,  
Caps on their heads, and Halberds in their hand;  
And Particolour'd Troops, a shining Train,  
Draw forth to Combat on the Velvet Plain.  
The skilful Nymph reviews her Force with Care,  
*Let Spades be Trumps*, she said, and Trumps they were.  
Now move to War her Sable *Matadores*,  
In Show, like Leaders of the swarthy *Moors*.  
*Spadillo* first, unconquerable Lord!  
Led off two captive Trumps, and swept the Board.  
As many more *Manillio* forc'd to yield,  
And march'd a Victor from the verdant Field.  
Him *Basto* follow'd, but his Fate, more hard,  
Gain'd but one Trump and one Plebeian Card.  
With his broad Sabre, next, a Chief in Years,  
The hoary Majesty of *Spades* appears;  
Puts forth one manly Leg, to sight reveal'd;  
The rest, his many-colour'd Robe conceal'd.  
The Rebel-*Knave*, that dares his Prince engage,  
Proves the just Victim of his Royal Rage.  
Ev'n mighty *Pam*, that Kings and Queens o'erthrew,  
And mow'd down Armies in the Fights of *Loo*,

Sad Chance of War! now, destitute of Aid,  
Falls undistinguish'd by the Victor Spade!  
Thus far, both Armies to *Belinda* yield;  
Now, to the *Baron* Fate inclines the Field.  
His warlike *Amazon* her Host invades,  
Th' Imperial Consort of the Crown of *Spades*.  
The *Club's* black Tyrant first her Victim dy'd,  
Spite of his haughty Mien, and barb'rous Pride:  
What boots the Regal Circle on his Head,  
His Giant Limbs in State unwieldy spread?  
That, long behind, he trails his pompous Robe,  
And, of all Monarchs, only grasps the Globe.  
The *Baron*, now his *Diamonds* pours apace;  
Th' embroider'd *King* who shows but half his Face,  
And his refulgent *Queen*, with Pow'rs combin'd,  
Of broken Troops an easie Conquest find.  
*Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts*, in wild Disorder seen,  
With Throngs promiscuous strow the level Green.  
Thus, when dispers'd, a routed Army runs,  
Of *Asia's* Troops, and *Africk's* Sable Sons;  
With like Confusion different Nations fly,  
In various Habits, and of various Dye,  
The pierc'd Battalions dis-united fall  
In Heaps on Heaps; one Fate o'erwhelms them all.  
The *Knave* of *Diamonds* now exerts his Arts,  
And wins (oh, shameful Chance!) the *Queen* of *Hearts*.  
At this, the Blood the Virgin's Cheek forsook,  
A livid Paleness spreads o'er all her Look;  
She sees, and trembles at th' approaching Ill,

Just in the Jaws of Ruin, and *Codille*.  
And now, (as oft in some distemper'd State)  
On one nice *Trick* depends the gen'ral Fate,  
An *Ace* of *Hearts* steps forth; The *King*, unseen,  
Lurk'd in her Hand, and mourn'd his captive *Queen*.  
He springs to Vengeance with an eager Pace,  
And falls like Thunder on the prostrate *Ace*.  
The Nymph exulting, fills with Shouts the Sky,  
The Walls, the Woods, and long Canals reply."

Things did not improve in the next reign, for Malcolm tells us, that gaming was dreadfully prevalent in 1718, which might be demonstrated by the effect of one night's search by the Leet Jury of Westminster, who presented no less than thirty-five houses to the Justices for prosecution. And in the reign of George II. we have numerous notices of gambling: and the first number of the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1731 gives for the information of its readers the following list of officers established in the most notorious gaming houses: —

"1. A *Commissioner*, always a Proprietor, who looks in of a Night, and the Week's Accompt is audited by him, and two others of the Proprietors. — 2. A *Director*, who superintends the Room. — 3. An *Operator*, who deals the Cards at a cheating Game, called *Faro*. — 4. Two *Crowpees*,<sup>25</sup> who watch the Cards, and gather the Money for the Bank. — 5. Two *Puffs*, who have Money given them to decoy others to play. — 6. A *Clerk*, who is a Check upon

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<sup>25</sup> Croupiers.

the Puffs, to see that they sink none of the Money that is given them to play with. – 7. A *Squib*, is a Puff of a lower Rank, who serves at half Salary, while he is learning to deal. – 8. A *Flasher*, to swear how often the Bank has been stript. – 9. A *Dunner*, who goes about to recover Money lost at Play. – 10. A *Waiter*, to fill out Wine, snuff Candles, and attend in the Gaming Room. – 11. An *Attorney*, a *Newgate* Solicitor. – 12. A *Captain*, who is to fight a Gentleman that is peevish at losing his money. – 13. An *Usher*, who lights Gentlemen up and down Stairs, and gives the Word to the Porter. – 14. A *Porter*, who is, generally, a Soldier of the Foot Guards. – 15. An *Orderly Man*, who walks up and down the outside of the Door, to give Notice to the Porter, and alarm the House, at the Approach of the Constables. – 16. A *Runner*, who is to get Intelligence of the Justices meeting. – 17. *Linkboys*, *Coachmen*, *Chairmen*, *Drawers*, or *others*, who bring the first Intelligence of the Justices Meetings, or, of the Constables being out, at Half a Guinea Reward. – 18. *Common Bail Affidavit Men*, *Ruffians*, *Bravoes*, *Assassins*, cum multis aliis.”

We have read before (p. 49) of the King’s gambling at the Groom Porter’s on 5 Jan. 1731, but, to show the fairness and equality of the law, I will give the very next paragraph: “At Night (5 Jan.) Mr *Sharpless*, High Constable of *Holborn* Division, with several of his petty Constables, searched a notorious Gaming House behind *Gray’s Inn Walks*, by Vertue of a Warrant from the Right Hon. Lord *Delawar*, and eleven other of his Majesty’s Justices of the Peace for the County of *Middlesex*; but the



Gamesters, having previous Notice, they all fled, except the Master of the House, who was apprehended, and bound in a Recognizance of £200 penalty, pursuant to the old Statute of 33 Hen. VIII.”

The *Grub Street Journal* of 28 Dec. 1733, gives a practical hint how to utilise Gambling: “Dear *Bavy*. – As Gaming is becoming fashionable, and the Increase of the Poor a general Complaint, I propose to have a Poor’s Box fix’d up in some convenient Place in every House, which may contain all Money that shall be won at Cards, or any other Games; and that a proper Person be appointed in every Parish to keep the Key, and to collect Weekly from each House what has been dropt into the Box, in order to distribute it among the poor, every *Sunday*. A Friend of mine, being obliged to play pretty high in a Family, where he visited, had, generally, Luck on his Side. In some time, the Master of the Family became extreamly embarrass’d in the World. My Friend, being acquainted with it, and touch’d with so moving a Circumstance, went home, and, opening a Drawer where he had deposited the Winnings brought from his House, repaid him; thereby, he retrieved his Credit, and whereby the whole Family was saved from Ruin. – Yours &c., Jeremy Hint.”

Another letter in the same Journal, 2 Sept. 1736, shows how the canker of gambling was surely eating into the very heart of the nation. It is *à propos* of private Gaming Houses. “I beg leave, through your Means, to make a few Remarks upon the great Encrease of a Vice, which, if not timely prevented, will

end in the Ruin of the young and unwary of both Sexes; I mean, Play in private Houses, and more particularly that artful and cheating *Game* of *Quadrille*. It is the constant business of the *Puffs* who belong to the Gaming Societies, to make a general Acquaintance, and, by a Volubility of Tongue, to commend Company and Conversation: to advise young People, or those who have but lately come to Town, to improve themselves in the *Beau Monde*. The young and unwary, thro' their Inexperience, greedily swallow this Advice, and deliver themselves up to the Conduct of these Harpies who swarm in every Corner, where Visiting is in Fashion: by whom they are introduced into these polite Families, and taught to lose their Money and Reputation in a genteel Manner. These Societies consist mostly of two or three insignificant old Maids, the same number of gay Widows; a batter'd old Beau or two, who, in King William's time, were the Pink of the Mode: The Master of the House, some decay'd Person of a good Family, made use of merely as a Cypher to carry on the Business, by having the Honour to be marry'd to the Lady, who, to oblige her Friends and People of good Fashion only, suffers her House to be made use of for these Purposes. In these places it is that young Ladies of moderate Fortunes are drawn in, to the infallible Ruin of their Reputations; and when, by false Cards, Slipping, Signs, and Crimp, they are stript of their last Guinea, their wretched companions will not know them. Any one acquainted with the West End of the Town cannot but have observed all this with Regret, if they have Honour and

Compassion in them. Nor need I mention the West End only. I believe all Points of the Compass are infected, and it were to be wished a Remedy could be found out to prevent it.”

An attempt to remedy this state of things was made, in 1739, by passing “an Act for the more efficient preventing of excessive and deceitful gaming” (12 Geo. II. c. 28), which provided that the Person that keeps a house, or other place, to game in, forfeits £200, half to the prosecutor, and half to the poor of the parish, except at Bath, where the half goes to poor in the Hospital. Lotteries, Sales, Shares in Houses to be determined by Lottery, Raffle, &c., are under this Act, the Lands, Houses, &c. forfeited. All persons gaming in the places aforesaid, or adventurers in Lotteries, on conviction forfeit £50. The games forbidden are Ace of Hearts, Faro, Basset and Hazard, except in Royal Palaces. Justices of Peace refusing to act and convict on this Act forfeit £10.

But this Act did not go far enough, and it was amended by the 18 Geo. II. c. 34. The Journals of the House of Lords have a curious story to tell about this Act.

“*Dies Lunæ, 29 Aprilis 1745.* The House (according to Order) was adjourned during Pleasure, and put into Committee upon the Bill intituled ‘An Act to amend, explain, and make more effectual, the Laws in being, to prevent excessive and deceitful Gaming: and to restrain and prevent the excessive Increase of Horse Races.’

After some time the House was resumed.

And the Earl of Warwick reported from the said Committee that they had gone through the Bill, and made some Amendments thereto; which he would be ready to report, when the House will please to receive the same.

Ordered. That the Report be received to-morrow.

The House being informed ‘That Mr Burdus, Chairman of the Quarter Sessions for the City and Liberty of Westminster, Sir Thomas de Veil, and Mr Lane, Chairman of the Quarter Sessions for the County of Middlesex, were at the door.’

They were called in, and, at the Bar, severally gave an account that claims of privilege of Peerage were made, and insisted on, by the Ladies Mordington and Casselis, in order to intimidate the peace officers from doing their duty in suppressing the public gaming houses kept by the said Ladies.

And the said Burdus thereupon delivered in an instrument in writing, under the hand of the said Lady Mordington, containing the claim she made of privilege for her officers and servants employed by her in the said gaming house.

And then they were directed to withdraw.

And the said Instrument was read, as follows: —

‘I, Dame Mary, Baroness of Mordington, do hold a house in the Great Piazza, Covent Garden, for and as an Assembly, where all persons of credit are at liberty to frequent and play at such diversions as are used at other Assemblys. And I have hired Joseph Dewberry, William Horsely, Ham Cropper, and George Sanders, as my servants, or managers, (under me) thereof. I

have given them orders to direct the management of the other inferior servants, (namely) John Bright, Richard Davis, John Hill, John Vandenvoren, as box-keepers. Gilbert Richardson, housekeeper, John Chaplain, regulator, William Stanley and Henry Huggins, servants that wait on the Company at the said Assembly, William Penny and Joseph Penny, as porters thereof. And all the above mentioned persons I claim as my domestick servants, and demand all those privileges that belong to me, as a Peeress of Great Britain, appertaining to my said Assembly. M. Mordington. Dated 8 Jan. 1745.’

Resolved and declared that no Person is entitled to Privilege of Peerage against any prosecution, or proceeding, for keeping any public or common gaming house, or any house, room, or place for playing at any game, or games prohibited by any law now in force.”

These ladies had already been presented by the Grand Jury for the County of Middlesex on 10 May 1744, together with the proprietors of the avenues leading to and from the several Playhouses in Covent Garden and Drury Lane, the proprietors of Sadler’s Wells, and the proprietors of New Wells in Goodman’s Fields, The London Spaw, Clerkenwell, and Halden’s New Theatre, in May Fair.

One of the most curious anecdotes of gambling, about this date, is the following<sup>26</sup>: – “1735. Oct. A child of James and

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<sup>26</sup> Local Records, &c., of Remarkable events. Compiled by John Sykes. Newcastle, 1824, p. 79.

Elizabeth Leesh of Chester le street, was played for at cards, at the sign of the Salmon, one game, four shillings against the child, by Henry and John Trotter, Robert Thomson and Thomas Ellison, which was won by the latter, and delivered to them accordingly.”

The law was occasionally put in motion, as we find. “*Gent. Mag.*, Oct. 31, 1750. About 9 o’clock at night, a party of soldiers and constables, with proper warrants, enter’d a notorious gaming house, behind the *Hoop* tavern in the *Strand*, and seiz’d 36 gamblers, and carry’d them to the vestry room at *St Martin’s*, where the justices were sitting for that purpose; 21 of them, next morning, for want of bail, were committed to the *Gatehouse*, and the others bound in a recognizance of £80, to answer at the next Sessions; the fine gaming tables, which cost £200, were chopt to pieces, and a great part burnt.”

“Feb. 1, 1751. Justice *Fielding* having received information of a rendezvous of gamesters in the *Strand*, procured a strong party of guards, who seized 45 at the table, which they broke to pieces, and carry’d the gamesters before the justice, who committed 39 of them to the *Gatehouse* and admitted the other 6 to bail. There were three tables broken to pieces, which cost near £60 apiece; under each of them were observed two iron rollers, and two private springs, which those who were in the secret could touch, and stop the turning whenever they had any youngsters to deal with, and, so, cheated them of their money.”

“Ap. 17, 1751. *Thomas Lediard*, Esq., attended by a constable

and a party of guards, went this night to the Long Room, in James St., Westminster, where there was a Masquerade, in order to suppress the notorious practice of gaming, for which such assemblies are calculated. The whole was conducted without opposition, or mischief. Seventeen were committed to the gatehouse, some were discharged, and others gave sufficient bail, never to play at any unlawful game, or resort to any gaming house. Numbers escaped over the Park wall, and other places, notwithstanding the vigilance of the magistrate and his assistants. The gaming tables were broke to pieces.”

We have many instances of the industry and vigilance of the London magistrates, especially Fielding, who, in 1756, wrote a warning to the public,<sup>27</sup> entitled “The artifices and stratagems of the profligate and wicked part of the inhabitants of this great metropolis, in order to defraud and impose upon the weak and unwary, being multiplied to an incredible degree, *Mr Fielding* has taken the pains to lay before the public a detail of such of them as have fallen under his own immediate observation as a Magistrate: in the recital of which he has mark’d the progress of deceit from the lowest pickpocket to the most accomplish’d gambler. That none may be in ignorance of the snares that are continually laid for them, this history of Gambling is inserted.” And in *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, by Smollett, Fielding’s contemporary and brother novelist, we have a full description of a professional gambler’s life.

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<sup>27</sup> *Gent. 's Mag.*, V. xxvi. 564.

## CHAPTER IV

Gambling at Bath – Beau Nash – Anecdotes of him – A lady gambler – Horace Walpole's gossip about gambling – Awful story about Richard Parsons – Gambling anecdotes – C. J. Fox.

Nor was it only in London that this gambling fever existed: it equally polluted the quieter resorts of men, and at fashionable watering places, like Bath, it was rampant, as Oliver Goldsmith writes in his life of Beau Nash, of whom he tells several anecdotes connected with play. "When he first figured at *Bath*, there were few laws against this destructive amusement. The gaming table was the constant resource of despair and indigence, and the frequent ruin of opulent fortunes. Wherever people of fashion came, needy adventurers were generally found in waiting. With such Bath swarmed, and, among this class, Mr Nash was certainly to be numbered in the beginning; only, with this difference, that he wanted the corrupt heart, too commonly attending a life of expedients; for he was generous, humane, and honourable, even though, by profession, a gambler."

A thousand instances might be given of his integrity, even in this infamous profession, where his generosity often impelled him to act in contradiction to his interest. Wherever he found a novice in the hands of a sharper, he generally forewarned



him of the danger; whenever he found any inclined to play, yet ignorant of the game, he would offer his services, and play for them. I remember an instance to this effect, though too nearly concerned in the affair to publish the gentleman's name of whom it is related.

In the year 1725, there came to Bath a giddy youth, who had just resigned his fellowship at Oxford. He brought his whole fortune with him there; it was but a trifle, however, he was resolved to venture it all. Good fortune seemed kinder than could be expected. Without the smallest skill in play, he won a sum sufficient to make any unambitious man happy. His desire of gain increasing with his gains, in the October following he was *at all*, and added four thousand pounds to his former capital. Mr Nash, one night, after losing a considerable sum to this undeserving son of fortune, invited him to supper. Sir, cried this honest, though veteran gamester, perhaps you may imagine I have invited you, in order to have my revenge at home; but, sir, I scorn such an inhospitable action. I desired the favour of your company to give you some advice, which, you will pardon me, sir, you seem to stand in need of. You are now high in spirits, and drawn away by a torrent of success. But, there will come a time, when you will repent having left the calm of a college life for the turbulent profession of a gamester. Ill runs will come, as certain as day and night succeed each other. Be therefore advised; remain content with your present gains; for, be persuaded that, had you the Bank of England, with your present ignorance of gaming, it would

vanish like a fairy dream. You are a stranger to me; but, to convince you of the part I take in your welfare, I'll give you fifty guineas, to forfeit twenty, every time you lose two hundred at one sitting. The young gentleman refused his offer, and was at last undone!

“The late Duke of B. being chagrined at losing a considerable sum, pressed Mr Nash to tie him up for the future from playing deep. Accordingly, the beau gave his grace an hundred guineas, to forfeit ten thousand, whenever he lost a sum, to the same amount, at play at one sitting. The duke loved play to distraction; and, soon after, at hazard, lost eight thousand guineas, and was going to throw for three thousand more, when Nash, catching hold of the dice box, entreated his grace to reflect upon the penalty if he lost. The duke, for that time, desisted; but so strong was the furor of play upon him that, soon after losing a considerable sum at Newmarket, he was contented to pay the penalty.

“When the late Earl of T – d was a youth, he was passionately fond of play, and never better pleased than with having Mr Nash for his antagonist. Nash saw, with concern, his lordship's foible, and undertook to cure him, though by a very disagreeable remedy. Conscious of his own superior skill, he determined to engage him in single play for a very considerable sum. His lordship, in proportion as he lost his game, lost his temper, too; and, as he approached the gulph, seemed still more eager for ruin. He lost his estate; some writings were put into the winner's

possession: his very equipage deposited as a last stake, and he lost that also. But, when our generous gamester had found his lordship sufficiently punished for his temerity, he returned all, only stipulating that he should be paid five thousand pounds whenever he should think proper to make the demand. However, he never made any such demand during his lordship's life; but, some time after his decease, Mr Nash's affairs being in the wane, he demanded the money of his lordship's heirs, who honourably paid it without any hesitation."

There is a sad story told of a lady gambler at Bath, which must have occurred about this time, say 1750 or thereabouts. Miss Frances Braddock, daughter of a distinguished officer, Maj. – Gen. Braddock, was the admiration of the circle in which she moved. Her person was elegant, her face beautiful, and her mind accomplished. Unhappily for her, she spent a season at Bath, where she was courted by the fashionables there present, for her taste was admirable and her wit brilliant. Her father, at his death, bequeathed twelve thousand pounds between her and her sister (a large amount in those days), besides a considerable sum to her brother, Maj. – Gen. Braddock, who was, in the American War, surrounded by Indians, and mortally wounded, dying 13th July 1755. Four years after her father's death, her sister died, by which her fortune was doubled – but, alas! in the course of one short month, she lost the whole; gambled away at cards.

It soon became known that she was penniless, and her sensitive spirit being unable to brook the real and fictitious condolences,

she robed herself in maiden white, and, tying a gold and silver girdle together, she hanged herself therewith, dying at the early age of twenty-three years.

Gossiping Horace Walpole gives us many anecdotes of gambling in his time, scattered among his letters to Sir Horace Mann, &c. In one of them (Dec. 26, 1748), he tells a story of Sir William Burdett, of whom he says; “in short, to give you his character at once, there is a wager entered in the bet book at White’s (a MS. of which I may, one day or other, give you an account), that the first baronet that will be hanged, is this Sir William Burdett.”

The Baronet casually met Lord Castledurrow (afterwards Viscount Ashbrook), and Captain (afterwards Lord) Rodney, “a young seaman, who has made a fortune by very gallant behaviour during the war,” and he asked them to dinner.

“When they came, he presented them to a lady, dressed foreign, as a princess of the house of Brandenburg: she had a toad eater, and there was another man, who gave himself for a count. After dinner, Sir William looked at his watch, and said ‘J – s! it is not so late as I thought, by an hour; Princess, will your Highness say how we shall divert ourselves till it is time to go to the play!’ ‘Oh!’ said she, ‘for my part, you know I abominate everything but Pharaoh.’ ‘I am very sorry, Madam,’ replied he, very gravely, ‘but I don’t know whom your Highness will get to tally to you; you know I am ruined by dealing.’ ‘Oh!’ says she, ‘the Count will deal to us.’ ‘I would, with all my soul,’ said the Count, ‘but I protest

I have no money about me.’ She insisted: at last the Count said, ‘Since your Highness commands us peremptorily, I believe Sir William has four or five hundred pounds of mine, that I am to pay away in the city to-morrow; if he will be so good as to step to his bureau for that sum, I will make a bank of it.’ Mr Rodney owns he was a little astonished at seeing the Count shuffle with the faces of the cards upwards; but, concluding that Sir William Burdett, at whose house he was, was a relation, or particular friend of Lord Castledurrow, he was unwilling to affront my lord. In short, my lord and he lost about a hundred and fifty apiece, and it was settled that they should meet for payment, the next morning, at Ranelagh. In the meantime, Lord C. had the curiosity to inquire a little into the character of his new friend, the Baronet; and being *au fait*, he went up to him at Ranelagh, and apostrophised him; ‘Sir William, here is the sum I think I lost last night; since that, I have heard that you are a professed pickpocket, and, therefore, desire to have no farther acquaintance with you.’ Sir William bowed, took the money and no notice; but, as they were going away, he followed Lord Castledurrow, and said, ‘Good God! my lord, my equipage is not come; will you be so good as to set me down at Buckingham Gate?’ and, without waiting for an answer, whipped into the chariot, and came to town with him. If you don’t admire the coolness of this impudence, I shall wonder.”

“10 Jan. 1750. To make up for my long silence, and to make up a long letter, I will string another story, which I have just heard, to this. General Wade was at a low gaming house, and had

a very fine snuff-box, which, on a sudden, he missed. Everybody denied having taken it: he insisted on searching the company. He did: there remained only one man, who had stood behind him, but refused to be searched, unless the General would go into another room, alone, with him. There the man told him, that he was born a gentleman, was reduced, and lived by what little bets he could pick up there, and by fragments which the waiters sometimes gave him. ‘At this moment I have half a fowl in my pocket; I was afraid of being exposed; here it is! Now, Sir, you may search me.’ Wade was so struck, that he gave the man a hundred pounds; and, immediately, the genius of generosity, whose province is almost a sinecure, was very glad of the opportunity of making him find his own snuff-box, or another very like it, in his own pocket again.”

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