

FIRST PLAYING CARDS

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

INVENTION OF A VENETIAN.

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

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

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

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

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

"Given to Jacquemin Gringonneur, painter, for three packs of playing cards, in gold and various colors and ornamented with several devices, to carry before the lord our king for his amusement 56 sols of Paris."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

QUEER HOSPITALITY.

A Curious Experience in the Wilds of Arabia.

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

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

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

RHEUMATISM.

One Course of Treatment For the Cure of the Disease.

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

The Massachusetts General hospital of Boston allows the following diet for its rheumatic patients: Graham or brown bread, white bread (limited to one-half slice daily), corn, rice, milk, eggs, flour, puddings, crackers, beans, peas, all kinds of vegetables, except potatoes, tomatoes and asparagus, rhubarb, fresh fish, butter, cheese, buttermilk, cream, alkaline waters and toast. Avoid red meats, starch or potatoes, white bread and sugars.

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

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

Maddening Snuff.

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

Plenty to Do Them.

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

Sightseeing.

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

Contradictory.

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

NOTED BY A TOURIST.

Some of the Queer Things That Were Observed Abroad.

About half one's time in traveling abroad is spent in buying stamps. No matter how many I put on a letter I had no faith to believe that it would reach America. I found that I could send a letter with one stamp on it if I paid enough for it, also that I could get a denomination of which it would take twenty. In Cairo I put fifteen sphinxes and pyramids on the front of a letter and five on the back. As for postal cards, imagine asking for one in the Belgian language—Wereidpost-vereening!

But it is in a Mohammedan country that an American mind needs readjustment. We woke one morning in Constantinople and found our calendar nine days ahead of theirs, our watches seven hours behind and the name of the month Ramadan. The Mohammedans seem to live up to their religion in a more definite way than we do, and we soon learned what to expect. The porter would drop one's trunk when the muezzin called to prayer. The sacredness of animal life compelled us to walk around the hundreds of lazy dogs asleep on the sidewalk. We were required to take off our shoes instead of our hats when entering a mosque. Women were not allowed to pray, because they "have no souls." Friday was the day for Sunday, and a camera was an "evil eye" and could not be carried into any sacred place. Our artist was once charged 20 cents extra for keeping an evil eye in his room all night.

Before the journey ends the tourist has lost his identity completely. At first he is from "Kalamazoo, Mich.," then from "Michigan," later "the United States," soon the "States," and the writer was once introduced to a gentleman from Tuscany as "the lady from North America."—Delineator Magazine.

THE KINGFISHER.

A Bird Whose Ways Are Most Difficult to Observe.

Perhaps there is nothing in nature more difficult to observe than the ways of the kingfisher. Any one may see him glancing down midstream or making his sudden arrow flight from bank to bank under the bright June sunshine, but to track him down to his secret fishing place and watch him at work is a vastly more difficult thing.

You come from the gold clad meadows into the shady river path as into a cathedral aisle. The willows crowd down to the water's edge. In the green reeds a sedge bird is fretting. There is a low twittering song of nestlings all round you. And now, in the shade of the deep of the willow wood, a shrill, piping note cuts the silence, a flash of emerald passes, a kingfisher has gone by on his way to his favorite pool.

A common notion is that he sits perfectly still on some branch overhanging the water, a picture of crafty vigilance. But this is rarely if ever the case. The truth is, says a writer in the London Chronicle, that the kingfisher, like the master he is, sets about his work with an easy surety, almost a nonchalance. Peering down upon him warily through the screen of branches you would judge that the last thing in the world he was thinking about was the gilding brown water below him. He twirls round on his perch, making his vivid green and turquoise and amber plumage scintillate like a dewdrop in the one beam of sunlight that has found him out.

He preens his feathers, stretches a lazy wing now and again, looks about him with a casual eye, and then, as if it were the merest trifling detail in life, he suddenly points his two inch long fishing spear of a bill at the water beneath him, plunges and is gone.

The Withering Wind.

The name of barnatan has been given a periodical wind which blows from the interior of Africa toward the Atlantic during the three months of December, January and February. It sets in with a fog or dry haze, which sometimes conceals the sun for whole weeks together. Every plant, every bit of grass and leaf in its course is withered as though it had been seared by heat from a furnace. Often within an hour after it begins to blow green grass is dry enough to burn like paper. Even the hardened natives lose all of the skin on exposed parts during the prevalence of this withering wind.

Painful Ailment.

Though gout is generally reckoned a disease of rich men and free livers, one of the worst of sufferers from it was a well known English minister who died not long ago.

A friend once said to him, "Dr. So-and-so, what is gout like?" The clergyman smiled sadly. "If you put your hand in a vise," he said, "and let a man press as hard as he can, that is rheumatism, and if he can be got to press a little harder, that is gout."

Why He Came Back.

"Wasn't you here a few weeks ago?" asked the woman of the house at the back door.

"Yes'm," replied the wanderer, "but I understood from a pal that you've got a new pastry cook since then!"—Yonkers Statesman.

The Surer Way.

"How can we interest her?" "Tell her it's a worthy cause," suggested one. "Tell her it's getting to be a popular fad," interposed a wiser head.—Louisville Courier-Journal.

One of the luckiest things that can happen to a man is not to count on his luck.—New York Press.

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