



Sharp  
Ink

# JOHN ASHTON



**THE HISTORY  
OF GAMBLING IN ENGLAND**

**John Ashton**

# **The History of Gambling in England**

Sharp Ink Publishing  
2022  
Contact: [info@sharpinkbooks.com](mailto:info@sharpinkbooks.com)

ISBN 978-80-282-3643-4

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

[INTRODUCTORY](#)

[CHAPTER I](#)

[" The Perpetual Almanack, or Soldier's Prayer Book.](#)

[CHAPTER II](#)

[CHAPTER III](#)

[CHAPTER IV](#)

[CHAPTER V](#)

[CHAPTER VI](#)

[CHAPTER VII](#)

[CHAPTER VIII](#)

[CHAPTER IX](#)

[CHAPTER X](#)

[CHAPTER XI](#)

[CHAPTER XII](#)

[CHAPTER XIII](#)

[CHAPTER XIV](#)

[CHAPTER XV](#)

[CHAPTER XVI](#)

[CHAPTER XVII](#)

[CHAPTER XVIII](#)

[CHAPTER XIX](#)

[CHAPTER XX](#)

[CHAPTER XXI](#)

[A LUCKY SPECULATOR.](#)

[JEAMES OF BUCKLEY SQUARE.](#)

[CHAPTER XXII](#)

# INTRODUCTORY

## Table of Contents

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—Bourchier—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[1] 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.”[2]

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 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[3] 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 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

PISCEN

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. 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,[\[6\]](#) 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’; 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 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, Giltts, 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 *Dammies*, 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[8] (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[9] (1663-1704) speaks of them as follows. “In some places they call Gaming Houses *Academies*; 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 Bulkiers 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,[\[10\]](#) 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