

LADIES WERE GAMBLERS.

Mary Queen of Scots Would Wager Her Personal Attire on a Game of Cards.

The card season is over, and as my lady fine sits and counts her pleasures and pains, her losses and gains, she feels no remorse, not a pang of conscience, not a regret of a game, unless it be on the venture she lost, since "Luck and Chance happeneth to all men."

A century or so ago, says the St. Louis Post Dispatch, there were hundreds of great ladies in England who made of their drawing rooms regular gambling dens, and in these drawing rooms of the world of fashion ladies in the most excited social positions lost or won, as the case might be, ten or thousands of pounds in a single night's play. The royal Princesses did not hesitate to play for the highest stakes and a faro bank was a part of the paraphernalia of dame fashion.

While the American women of today have more leisure than the women of more primitive times and conditions, in this country and, therefore, turn more frequently for entertainment to games and cards, they do not indulge their love of cards to the same extent as did the sex in England in days when Lord Kanyon threatened that women convicted of gambling "should certainly exhibit themselves in the pillory though they should be first ladies in the land." However, American women are fond of cards and, deplore it if you will, many of them play for money in an enormous extent.

Fashion varies as to the game of vogue. The once popular progressive euchre has been abolished and its place we find the more technical game of bridge. Euchre is not an all absorbing game. Memory and luck are the vital elements, and a vain and sociability may run on unrestrained which may be considered its chief merit. But with bridge it is different.

Cards are supposed to be very similar to chess. They are of Indian origin, and chess represented chess on paper. Chess is represented in sculpture, with a king and an army and this army is represented in the same in painting. Playing cards were known to the Arabians and Seracens from the beginning of the 12th century. They were carried into Europe from India and China.

The queen in the card game does not hold the exalted position that she stands for in chess, where she is a general. It would seem that the game of chess might find popularity in the ranks of the suffragists, and that the card game would be abolished, since the queen of cards is necessarily meekly subordinate to her sovereign lord and master.

Queen Elizabeth was fond of cards, but inclined to be peevish and lose her temper in the game. Mary Queen of Scots carried her infatuation to the extent of wagering her personal attire on the game. She would play continuously from Saturday night to Monday and sacrifice her wardrobe, if necessary, to the game.

Queen Anne of Austria had a passion for cards. She is said to have lost a million crowns at cards. Anne Boleyn was an inveterate gambler, as was all the wives of Henry VIII, with one exception. Catherine of Aragon did not gamble. She had no love for the card table. Nell Gwyn lost 400 guineas in one night to the niece of the notorious gambler, Mazarin, who afterward died insolvent, having lost at cards an enormous fortune left to her by her Cardinal uncle.

Oliver Goldsmith relates a story of a woman who insisted on playing a game of cribbage with the minister who had come to soothe her dying hours. The clergyman lost every penny he had with him and he was just dealing the cards for another game, her spiritual adviser's stake being her own funeral expenses when she died, leaving the game unwon.

At the French Court the card rooms from the time Charles VI to the time of Louis XVI, were luxuriously furnished. The counters used were of a mother of pearl of some other valuable substance. The cards were embroidered with silver on white stina, and some were the work of the most famous miniature painters.

A story is told of the famous Dowager Electress of Saxony, who and who was not above taking advantage of her position when opportunity offered. One evening, she "committed some irregularity" (as cheating is termed when done by some person of high rank.) Suspicions of her honesty were excited by her play. A countess who noticed this said: "Pardon, madame, my suspicions could not fall on you. Sovereigns cheat only for crowns."

The descendants of lady Catherine Alexander, daughter of Major Gen. Lord Sterling and wife of Col. William Duer tell the following anecdote: "The dame was fond of whist and it is probable that cards were not common nor as cheap as they are now, so women carried their own packs with them to card parties. One morning while attending services at St. Paul's church, New York, her ladyship pulled her handkerchief out of her capacious pocket, and with it drew out a pack of cards, which to the amusement of the congregation and to her own consternation scattered about the pew."

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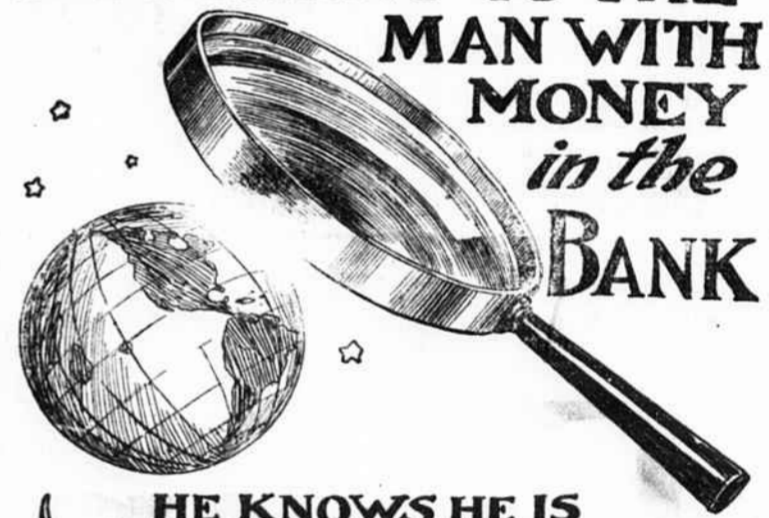
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