THE origin of many of the most important inventions of human ingenuity, notwithstanding the influence they have had on the progress of civilization, seems lost in the darkness and obscurity of the traditional annals of remote ages. Most of them have, however, met with that attention from curious inquirers into the history of manners and customs, which their respective importance has appeared to deserve. And among the rest, the games, sports, and pastimes, which took their rise with the dawn of refinement and civil polish, have been considered among the most interesting objects of research.

The game of chess in particular has been fortunate in the attention which has been paid to its history and probable origin, by the learned, and the curious; while Cards, which will be found in the sequel to be intimately connected with chess, and certainly not of much less interest, have met with but few inquirers into their history, and from those few but very cursory attention.
As we presume the origin of Cards to be much anterior to the period\(^1\) usually affixed to their invention, our attempt will be to trace their origin backward, as the traveller ascends a river to seek its source; and, though we may not discover the spring-head, yet will this retrograde journey along the stream of time be attended with its advantages; as in its course we shall probably meet with much that is of curiosity and interest to beguile the tedium of the way. Proceed we, therefore, to notice the earliest mention of them, by writers of various European nations, passing from one country to another in regular order.

According to Breitkopf, and Heineken, a\(^2\) book printed in the fifteenth century, mentions the year 1300 as the precise period of the introduction of Cards into Germany; and the former observes, that the information may be relied on with some degree of confidence, as it coincides with evidence derived from the old town\(^3\) books of several German cities; in which Cards are not named previous to that period, but that in many of rather subsequent date they are expressly mentioned.

France, it should seem, cannot boast a prior acquaintance with them; for those\(^4\) who have appealed to a decree of St. Louis as a testimony, have assuredly been mistaken: it appears to allude

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\(^1\) The reigns of Charles V. or VI. of France, about the close of the fourteenth century. *Menestriers, Biblioth. curieuse et instructive*, t. ii. p. 174; followed by Bullet, Schoeppninius, Fabricius, Fournier, Daniel, St. Foix, and numberless other writers.

\(^2\) Das Gulden Spiel, printed by Gunther Zainer, Augsburg, 1479, folio. Tit. 5. *Das caro spielt hat kntinem un als ich getreten sam, so ist es kommen in tscherchland der ewen, in dem jar, da man selt don crist geburt nacred vorhundert jar.*

\(^3\) That of Augsburg, 1673, which is attested by the emperor Rudolph I. although it mentions other games, makes no mention of Cards. The ancient Code of Nuremberg, wherein gambling high is prohibited, between the years 1286 and 1699, does not enumerate them among other common games. But in a later one, of 1580-4, Cards are mentioned among the games which are permitted. Breitkopf presumes that if the other old town books in Germany were examined, it is more than probable the precise time of their first introduction into that country might be fixed.

to dice and chess only. Cards make their appearance, in the
annals of Provence about the year 1361, and it appears, that the
knave, (Valet,) was then designated by the name of Tuchim, the
appellation by which a formidable band of robbers were known,
who, at that time were committing horrible ravages in the Comtat
Venaissin. Their further progress in France is presumed to be
proved from the mention made of them in the chronicle of Petit Jean
de Saintre under the reign of Charles V. and from a decree of that
monarch against gaming in 1369. It appears, therefore, that the
Germans and the French became acquainted with them about the
same time. A recent discovery of M. Van Praet seems, however,
to establish it as certain, that Cards were known in France, at least
as early as 1341. He has found them mentioned in a MS. belonging
to M. Lancelot, entitled "Renard le Contrefait."

This romance appears by some subsequent verses to have been

1 Tuchim. Pillard, Traitre, Rebelle. Roquefort, Glossaire de la Langue Ro-
maine, in voce.

2 Hist. et Chronique de Provence par Cesar Nostradamus, Lyon, 1614, the
popes, it is said, were obliged to preach a crusade against them.

The passage is as follows: Ichâ de Saitre pour celle nuit sen va coucher en la
châtre de l'Escuyer q'uy dict mô fils Saitre jay grût regret que nous laines mais je suis
troisjoyeux de vostre bien et puis dit aux
autres paiges du roy qui entour Saitre es-
toient or advices mes enfans nese pas belle
chose que du bien faire & destre doux hâ-
able & paisible & a chacun gracieux; Vez
ry vostre çopagnoq q're pour estre tel, a ac-
quis la grace du roy, & de sa roye & de
tous. Et vous qui estes noiseux jouceux de
Cartes & des dez, & Suives déhonnêtes gês
tavernes & Cabarzis ne pour butre quel
vous face ne vous puis chastier, dont par
ainsi combien que de lieux vous estes tant ës
croises si vous ne mandez & plus chetifs &
mechans serrez: en disant ces paroles tu
fu-
rît despoissiles & sen vût coucher. Ch. xx.

Cards are not named in the decree of
1369: various games are enumerated in a
circumstantial manner: "tous jeux de dez,
de Tables, de Palms, de Quilles, de Palet,
de Soules, de Baille; et tous autres tels
gueiz qui ne chëst point a exercer, ne habi-
liter nos diz sous ez a fait & usage d'arme, a
la defence de notre dit Royaume, sur peine

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composed by its anonymous author in a period of 13 years, i.e. from 1328 to 1341.¹

The circumstance of the fleurs de lis being found in every court card, has been adduced as a proof that Cards were invented in France; but they are likewise found among the ornaments of the Romans at an early period, and also on the sceptres and crowns of the emperors of the west, in the middle ages, and on those of the kings of Castile, and of England, before the Norman conquest. But the early Cards of which we have given specimens, will be found not to bear this mark of French origin; the circumstance can only be considered, therefore, as an indication of the taste for armorial devices, prevalent at the time they were first known in France, and not any proof or assumption that they were invented there.

Cards are mentioned as being in common use among the Italians at the end of the thirteenth century.² *Tiraboschi* quotes a MS. of the date of 1299, in which they are expressly named.

We should, however, be enabled to boast a still earlier acquaintance with them in England, if the prohibition of the synod of Worcester, De Ludo Regis et Regina,³ in the year 1404, or the passage from the wardrobe Rolls of Edward 1st, quoted by *Anstis,*⁴ could

¹ *Jansen* Essai sur l’Hist. de la Gravure, t. i. p. 99. Paris 1808, 8vo. the whole of this extract will be found in the Appendix.
² *Storia della Letteratura Italiana,* t. vi. part 2. p. 402.
⁴ *Synodus Wigorniensis,* an. 1404, cap. 38, Prohibebimus etiam Clericis, ne intersint ludis in honestis, vel ludant ad aetas vel taxillos: nec sustineant *Ludos fieri de Rege et Regina,* nec arietes levari, nec palestras publicas fieri.—*videtur inmum ludus quem vulgo *CHARTARUM* dicimus si quidem ea etate notus fuerit. Mr. Gough says, “it rather seems to refer to the King and Queen of Twelfth day, derived from the Roman Saturnalia; it may, however, have referred to Chess, which must have been brought from Asia by the crusaders previous to this period.

*History of the Order of the Garter,* V. 2. p. 307, where he cites the following passage, from the Wardrobe Rolls of the 6th year of Edw. I. “ Walter Sturton ad opus regis ad ludendum ad *quatuor reges,* viii. s. v. d.” This game, *Anstis* conjectures, might be cards, wherein are *Kings of four suits.* He thinks the game of some antiquity, from the application of the word *Knave* to a youth placed next the King and Queen, and being as it were their son, in which sense that term was
be applied to Cards; but it is the opinion of several of our most able antiquaries, that they relate to other games.

Spain has found a champion for her claims to the invention of them in the Abbé Rive, who was induced, from the consideration of the term Naibi, by which Cards were known among the Italians about the year 1393, to suppose that they were brought into Italy by the Spaniards, at the time when they entered Sicily and Calabria under the Castilian princes, in 1267, and under Peter III. of Aragon, about 1282, because the term which continued to designate Cards among them until the fifteenth century, is nearly similar to that by which they are known to the Spaniards even to this day.

The Spaniards call their Cards Naipes, which word ¹ Bullet derives from the Biscayan Napa, signifying flat, even. The relation which this significations has to Cards, is not so obvious as Bullet imagines, and the Abbé Rive justly observes, that the learned men of Spain must be more competent judges: he therefore refers to the great Spanish Dictionary, in which it is said, that the word Naipes.

used. Chaucer says, “The King of Northumberland begot a knave child;” and this use of the word is frequent in his poems. In France also, this card is called Verlet, a name given to the King’s son.

¹ Eclaircissements Historiques sur l’Invention des Cartes à Jouer, 8vo. Paris, 1780.


³ Naipes. s. m. Carton cortado a la proporcion de la vigessima quarta parte de un pliego común, en que se pintan con diversos colores algunas figúras, en numero determinado, para jugar a varios juegos, formando un numero di quarenta á quarenta y ocho cartas, dividas en quatro palos á manjares que son oros, copas espadas, y bastos, y en cada uno de estos, tres figuras, que se llaman Rey, Caballo, y Sota, y los demas por los números hasta siete ó nueve, llamándose el primero, as. Tamarid quiere que sea nombre Arabigo, y lo mismo el Broceux; pero comunmente se juzga que les dió este nombre por la primera cifra que se les puso, que fue una N y una P con que se significaba el nombre de su inventor Nicolao Pepín: y de ahí con pequeña corrupcion se dice Naipe. Lat. Charta picta Lusoria. Diccionario de la Lengua Castellana. Madrid, 1734, fol. t. iv. p. 645.

In the Diccionario Trilingüe del Castellana Bascuence, (San Sebas-
is derived from the initial letters of the name of the inventor of Cards, N. P. Nicolao Pepin, in consequence of which he thinks himself authorised to consider the Spaniards as the inventors. Whether this etymology be more probable than that of Bullet, or whether the name of the supposed inventor has not rather been manufactured from the denomination of Cards, may be reasonably doubted, as there have been so many similar fables invented to illustrate historical doubts.

The earliest mention of Cards, however, among the Spaniards, is that adduced by the Abbé Rive from Gutery’s Translation* of Guevara’s Epistles: and this testimony, it must be confessed, is very doubtful, as it does not occur in the original Spanish text of any of the editions.

The prohibition of them, by John I. king of Castile, in 1387, is less disputable.†

It is not improbable that the Spaniards were acquainted with Cards at a much earlier period; we cannot however consider, that we have any thing like proof of their having been the inventors, but they probably derived them immediately from their Moorish invaders.

† Antonio de Guevara, Archbishop of Mondoñedo, Historiographer to Charles V. The first Spanish edition of his “Epistolae Familiarēs,” was printed at Valladolid in 1539. Of Gutery’s French translation, the first edition appeared in 1588, at Lyons, in 4to. In which Alphonso XI of Castile is said to have prohibited Cards, among the other games in the Statutes of the Order of the Band, in 1332. The passage stands thus “Commandeit leur ordre, que nul des Chevaliers de la Bande oisat jouer argent aux cartes ou des, &c. It is, however, extraordinary that none of the Spanish editions, nor the Italian, German, or English translations of these letters, contain a syllable about Cards in this passage; the whole of the Abbé Rive’s Hypothesis therefore rests upon the testimony of Gutery’s translation, and the fable of their name being derived from the initials of their inventor: slender grounds upon which to establish an historical fact.

* See Appendix.
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It is so difficult to account for the Spanish name of Cards, *Naipes,* from Spanish idioms, that *Breitkopf* was induced to seek its origin from the Arabic: the mixture of which with the Spanish language is well known, the conjecture and deduction are very ingenious. He says, “I was confirmed in my opinion by the signification of the Hebrew word *Naibes,* for the old Italian name of Cards, *Naibi,* resembles the Hebrew word still more, and in both languages it denotes *sorcery, fortune-telling, prediction, &c.* This applies much better to Cards, than the Biscayan word *Napa, flat, even,* as there is a certain foresight required in almost every game of Cards. That the Spaniards should transform *b* into *p,* is perfectly natural; *b* is by them pronounced *v.*

And this opinion of *Breitkopf* is still further confirmed by the circumstance of the denomination of the Knave, *Tuchim,* which seems to partake much more of Arabic than French origin. *Tuchán,* in Arabic, signifying *darkness, obscurity,* it might probably be bestowed upon this band of depredators, on account of their concealment in forests and obscure places. The Eastern origin of Cards appears still more probable, when we consider that we owe the introduction of chess among us to that people. The term *Naipes* is as much of Oriental origin as the name of chess, *Ssed renge,* or Hundred Cares, by which it is known among the Arabians. And on reference to *Cobarruvias* for his explanation of the term, we find that he cites authority in support of its Arabic derivation. The learned *Salvini* has also thrown

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1 Cards are also called *Naipes* in the Portuguese language.

2 *Naipes.* Libro disenguadernado en que se lec comunmente en todas estados que pudiera estar en el catalogo de los reprovados. Dixerose naipes de la cifra primera que tuvieron; en la qual se encerrava el nombre del inventor. Eran un N y F. y de allí les pareció llamarlos naipes; pero las dichas letras dezian Nicolao Pepín. *Tamarit* piensa ser Arabigo, y lo mismo el *Brocenc.* *Tesorö de la Lengua Castellana.* Madrid, 1674, folio.

3 In the Arabic, *Naba* signifies, he has emitted a gentle voice, as sorcerers do; from which root are derived *Naba,* the Sorcerer’s drum, and *Nabi,* a prophet or fortune-teller. *Etchon* in his *Introduction to the Old Testament* explains the Hebrew words *Nabi,* *Nabim,* by divine inspiration, and by individuals acting from divine inspiration. *Court de Gebelin* derives it from an oriental word *Nap,* which is said to denote as much as, *to take, to hold.*

4 *Naibi* cioè Carte a giocare, in Ispag-
out the same conjecture on the origin of the word *Naibi*, and even has gone so far as to say, that it is probable, for the knowledge of cards, we are indebted to the *Moors*.

History points distinctly at the road by which the Europeans may have derived their knowledge of Cards from this nation. The Saracens having spread with rapidity over Asia and Africa, had attempted to cross the sea, as early as the seventh century. In the year 652 they invaded Sicily, which they had completely conquered, by the year 832. We find them in Spain in the year 710, and about 731 they penetrated through Languedoc into France as far as Arles, and continued in possession of the southern parts of Spain until the year 1492. About the year 842, they proceeded from Sicily to Calabria,* and a few years afterwards to Rome and the Tuscan territory. They maintained themselves in different parts of Italy until the tenth century, and their power was such, that the pope and other Italian princes made use of their assistance in their wars with each other. In the beginning of the tenth century, a party of Saracens settled on the borders of Piedmont, penetrated as far as the Alps in the Valais, and safety from their inroads was purchased by ceding to them a tract of country among the mountains, about the middle of the same century.¹

Their long continuance in the immediate vicinity of the Italian, Spanish, and French people, and their consequent communication

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¹ They settled at Bari on the coast of Calabria, whether the Prince of Benevento had invited them to assist him against the Prince of Salerno; on which occasion they took possession of the town. Even after their expulsion from Sicily, when the remainder were brought back to Apulia, as prisoners, by the Emperor Frederic II.

² In the year 1281, and Nocera was their appointed residence, they were in Italy at an earlier period than the Spaniards, who only found their way there about 1267, with the two Castilian Princes; or in the reign of Peter of Aragon, about 1292. According to Muratori, l. v. p. 422, relates that they occupied the convent of St. Mauritius in the Valais, and plundered and murdered travellers: but that in the treaty of peace with Hugo, King of Italy, they were promised the mountainous district between Italy and Suabia to settle in.
with them, afforded these nations opportunities of becoming ac-
quainted with their literature, arts, customs, and amusements. It is
by no means necessary to suppose, that one nation derived an ac-
quaintance with this game from the other; they might each have
obtained it immediately from these oriental hordes themselves.
They were at that time an enlightened people, compared with the
inhabitants of Europe, and as it is acknowledged that we are in-
debted to them for the dawn of science and letters, and certainly for
the game of chess, why may we not also have derived from them
our knowledge of Playing-cards? which seem to owe their origin to
a different modification of the same principle. An objection may
be started that the Alcoran forbids all games of chance, but it is
not necessary to suppose, that hazardous betting or playing for
stakes, which among us is generally connected with the game, was
usual with them; or, perhaps, they knew how to avoid transgress-
ing the law in that respect, as well as they do with regard to the
prohibition of the use of wine. At least, the Moors are now fond
of playing at ombre in secret: according to Höst, they learnt this
game from the Spaniards; Niebuhr¹ says, that he saw European
Cards among the Greeks at Cairo, but not among the Mahometans;
but he found the latter playing at Cards in Bombay, and that on his
appearance they hid their money.

All this does not, however, prove that the Arabians were the in-
vventors; in the same way that they obtained the game of chess from
India through the Persians;² they may have derived Cards from

¹ Höst's Effetermination om Maroks og
  Fes. Kiobenh. 1779, 4to.
² Niebuhr, Voyage en Arabie, T. 1,
p. 140. Amst. 1776. 4to. Les Arabes
appelent le jeu des Cartes. Lāb-ēl Kamar.
J'ai vu a Bombay des vieux marchands
Arabes jouer avec des Cartes chinoises.
Elles sont incommodes, Je me souviens
d'avoir vu jouer quatre personnes, dont
chacun en eut tant, qu'à peine pouvait
elles les tenir dans les deux mains.
³ The Persians did not, however, obtain
the game of Chess from India, until the
age of the great Corsoī, or Casru, in the
middle of the sixth century. It reached
China nearly about the same period, in
the reign of the Emperor Wu-Ti. But it
was most probably unknown in Europe
previous to the crusades. ⁴ The first writ-
ten mention of the game among the Eu-
ropians, is in some of the old romances of
the Round Table; they, however, mention
them, or some other nation. There cannot, however, be a doubt, that they were introduced by their means into Europe, although it is now in vain we seek direct evidence of the fact. Had the work* which the learned Hyde projected on this subject come down to us, it would no doubt have set the question at rest, and thrown much light on the kind of Cards in use, and on the games played with them among the oriental nations. To develope this part of their history, much skill in the languages of the East would be requisite, and it is to be desired that some curious orientalist may at a future period think the subject worthy an attentive inquiry.

It has been asserted that Cards and Dice were invented by the Lydians, during the affliction of a famine in the reign of Atys; but, setting aside the improbability of the relation, the passage of Herodotus* from whence the deduction is made, does not warrant the mention of Cards in any degree. Among all the games mentioned by the antient Greek and Roman writers, there is not one which can, with good foundation, be supposed to designate cards; we may therefore safely conclude that they were unknown to them; for, possessing as we do, so many writers who have given a minute detail of their habits and manners, both public and private, had they been then in use, some mention of them would certainly have been made. Ovid* has on one occasion enumerated several games, proper to be

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* We gather from the preface to his book de Ludis Orientalibus, that he had prepared an appendix "in quo erit Historia Chartiulorum, & Hist. Cullis et Dininae, &c." I have been unable to obtain information whether the work, or his collections for it, exist in MS.

1 Herodot. lib. i.
2 De Arte Amandi, lib. ii.