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HIGH SOCIETY

Galloping Dominoes, Alias African Golf, Taken up by Toronto's Smart Set

A great game this, also known as Senegambian Polo, Louisiana Lacrosse, Mississippi Marbles, and Prancing Parchesi

Prancing Parchesi has invaded the realm of sport of Toronto's smart set. Formerly bridge was the only recognized method of coaxing money out of one pocket into another. Now Mississippi Marbles play the role of the great kale transferer. Galloping Dominoes have at last come into their own in the high life. In short, Toronto society is shooting craps.

The game may have been introduced by some member of the well-tailored staff who in the course of his activities as a conducting officer was brought into forced contact with the hoi polloi. He observed the manner of play with the cubes of certain of the rougher elements of the troops he conducted to England. On his return from the rigors of conducting, to show his familiarity with the lower classes, he introduced the game. It was a kind of slumming at first.

However the game was introduced, it is now firmly established. And now being able to seven easily and graciously on the initial roll is as much a social asset as the ability to negotiate a five-barred gate in good form.

Craps is defined in the dictionary as: "U.S. Local. A game of chance in which the object is to guess the numbers thrown on two dice."

That is what it may have been originally. Now it is international. Starting originally as a Negro game along the Mississippi waterfront, it has spread to every part of the world and is perhaps the most popular game of chance today.

Wherever the Yank has wandered, been sent, or fled to, he has taken the bones with him in the bottom of his tightest pocket. But they haven't remained there. They have come forth to the light and worked for him and spread their peculiar verbiage over most of two hemispheres.

For the benefit of those who are confronted with a succession of crap stories in the magazines, and whose knowledge of the game is only that it has something to do with seven and eleven, it might be explained. Since such highbrow writers as Joseph Hergesheimer have taken to writing crap stories such as his "Read Them and Weep" in a recent Century Magazine, it behooves the non-gambling reader to know something of the game purely for literary purposes.

The rudiments of Senegambian Polo are these:

The man rolling the dice decides what stake to put out. This is covered, or faded, by his opponent. The man with the dice then rolls.

He loses on the first roll of the two dice if the spots added together make two, three or twelve. This is called crapping out.

He wins on the initial roll if the numbers of the cubes add to seven or eleven.

If the shooter rolls any other number than those mentioned previously, he rolls again until he either wins by again rolling his first number or loses by rolling a seven.

That is all there is to craps on the surface. But the true crapshooter knows that it is a psychological study, a test of judgment, and that knowledge of the law of averages is necessary to success. This is not a treatise on “how to shoot craps,” but merely a statement of the remarkable way in which a game starting from such a lowly source has spread to such high places. The finer points of crap shooting will not be gone into. However, the dictionary was only half right. Craps is only to a limited extent a game of chance. If you don’t believe this, try your luck against an experienced manipulator of the ivories. It shouldn’t take him longer than about six passes to convince you that craps is a game of skill.

Toronto society can rest assured that it is not the only smart set that is playing Louisiana Lacrosse. While the gay blades kneel about the tea table and adjure Little Joe to come to father that baby may not be unclothed, they can be comfortable in the knowledge that they are quite au fait. For a certain Italian cavalry regiment whose officers rank socially with British Guards officers has been marked with the cloven hoof of the Yank and craps is the regimental passion.

An American consul tells of entering the barracks of the regiment and coming into the high-ceilinged dining hall, the walls lined with cases that contained the trophies of the regiment’s glorious history.

Kneeling on the floor of the dining hall in a reverent attitude were three captains, a major and a lieutenant of the Imperial cavalry and a young American sublieutenant.

The colonel was juggling the bones in his hand and addressing them in words the meaning of which he did not know, but whose potency he had often witnessed.

“Leetle Fever! Come to ze Doctor,” shouted the colonel, giving the cubes a Latin twist. A five appeared.

“You’re faded,” said the American, and he and the captain covered the bills that the colonel left on the floor.

The colonel rattled the dice in his hand and then shot them out onto the tiled floor. A ten showed. “Dieci!” said the captain joyfully.

“Beeg Deeck from Bawston!” The colonel caressed the cubes as he picked them up. He fondled them. He blew on them softly. “Reechard ze Lion ‘Earted rally round. Wham!”

It was a ten and the consul tiptoed out of the room. He was homesick and he couldn’t afford to lose.

Toronto society shouldn’t worry, its dalliance with the joy cubes has plenty of precedent. But I hope for their own sake that in their manipulations of the gallopers they never run afoul of a certain colonel of Italian cavalry.