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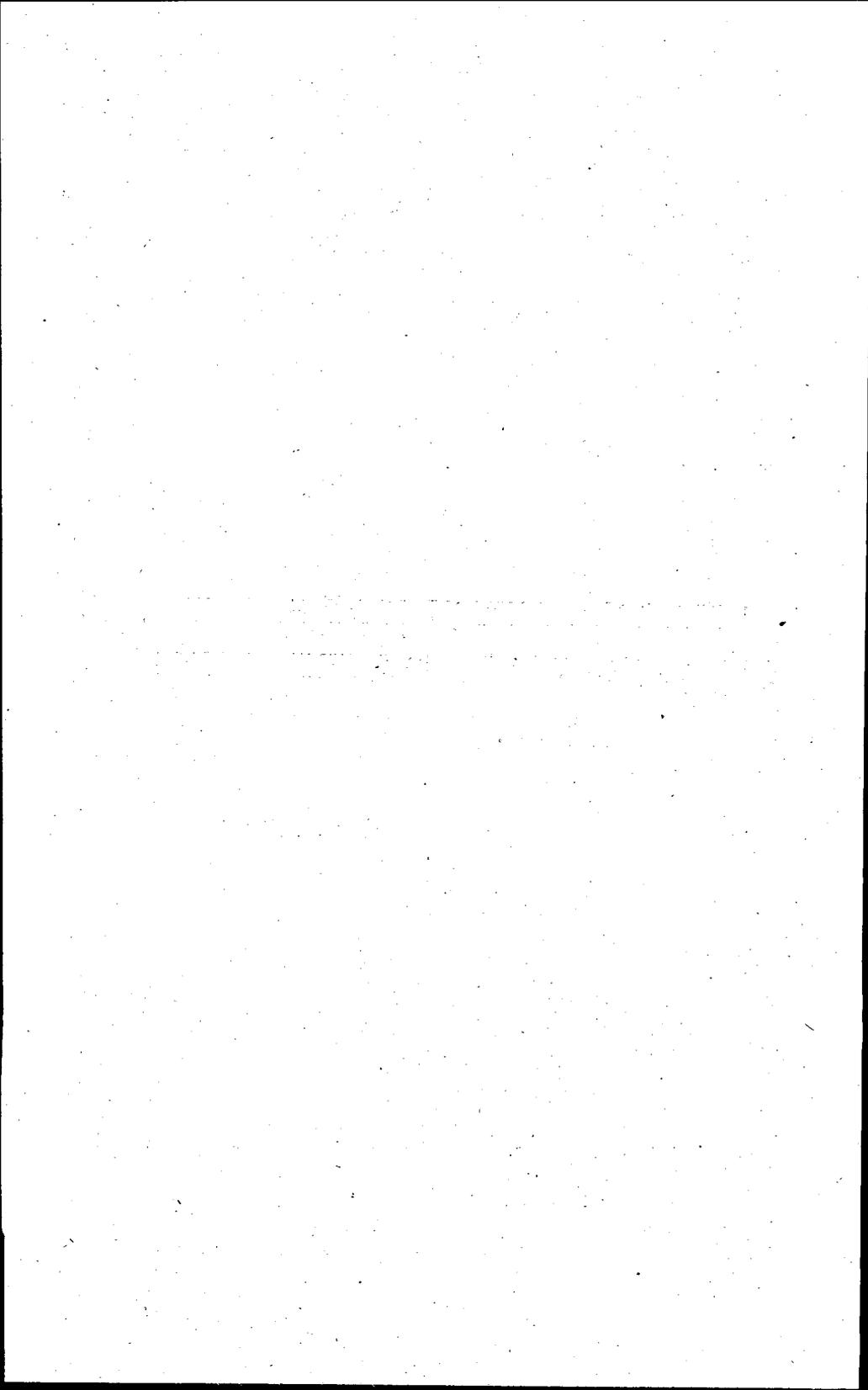
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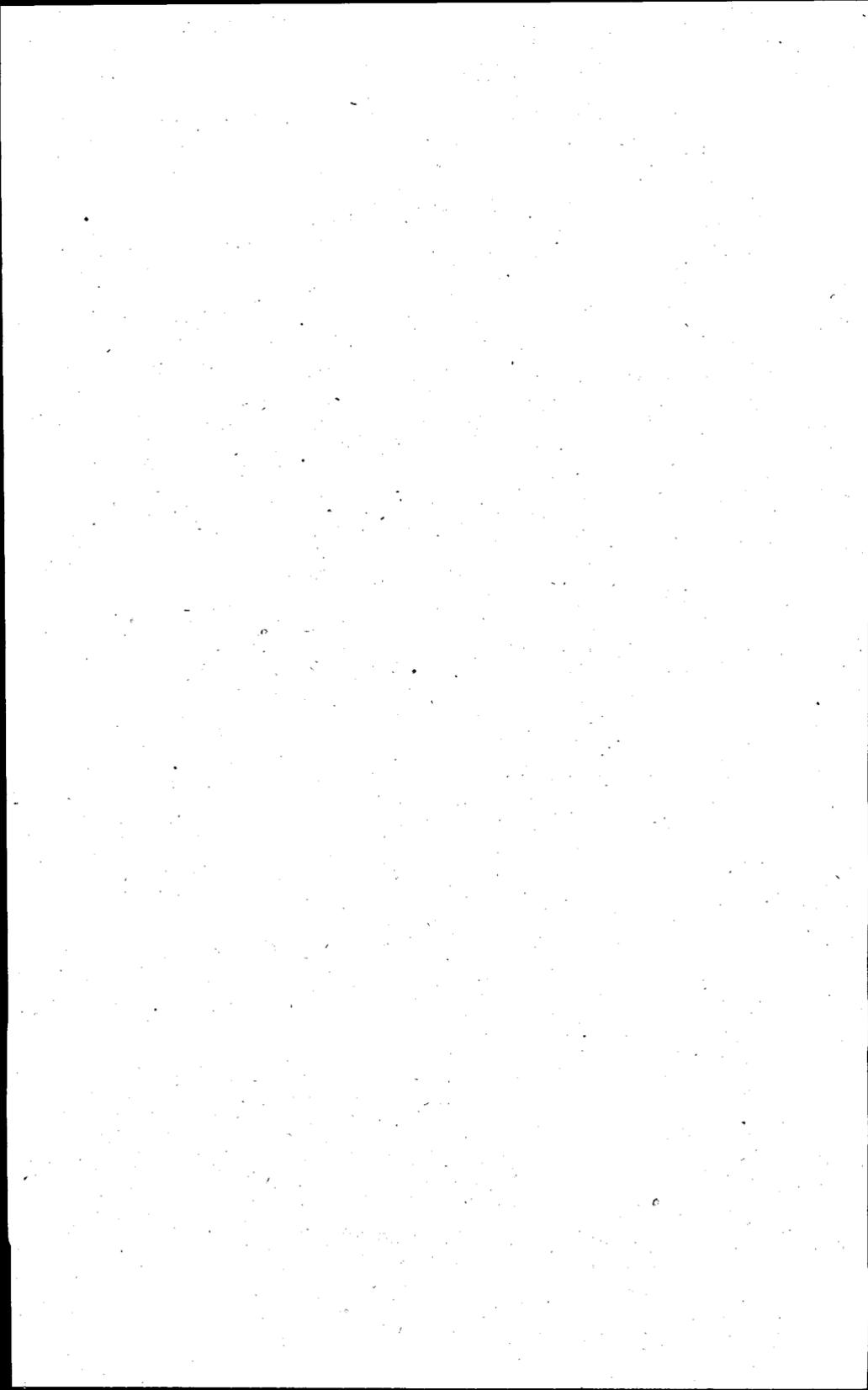
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MORE OLD PLAYING CARDS FOUND IN CAMBRIDGE.

By W. M. FLETCHER, M.D., Sc.D., Fellow of Trinity College.

(Read April 23rd, 1913.)

In a previous communication to the Society (19 Feb. 1906, Proceedings, No. XLVII, p. 454), I described some Elizabethan or early 17th century playing cards found during repairs to a staircase in the Great Court of Trinity College. More recently the whole of the South range of the Great Court, built from 1594 to 1597, and the Bishop's Hostel, built in 1670, have been repaired internally, and during the removal of the old floors and ceilings many cards and fragments of cards were found, of which some seem to be important enough to deserve permanent record.

In the Bishop's Hostel ten or a dozen cards whole or fragmentary were found in various parts of the building. These were all 18th century or later in date and need not be further described.

In the range of buildings, on the South side of the Great Court, containing five staircases exclusive of the Queen's Tower, more than thirty cards from at least nine different packs were found in whole or part, and of these twenty at least were certainly earlier in date than 1650. It must be presumed that the cards and fragments of cards so rescued from the rough operations of the workmen, after escape from the attacks of mice and of damp, represent only a small proportion of the whole number originally buried in the structure of the buildings, and I find it difficult to explain by what means so many cards should have come to their hiding places. There is no reason to suppose that Trinity College is, or was, more permeated by playing cards than other ancient buildings. I hope to describe in this paper some other very interesting 16th or 17th century cards found lately during the destruction of an old house in

Cambridge. During the recent reconstruction of the Master's Lodge at Christ's College two or three 16th or 17th century cards, unluckily without court cards, were found¹. In the British Museum, again, there are fifty-three cards from four different packs², described as being "found about 1750 behind some wainscoating in a house at Cambridge undergoing repairs." Perhaps antiquarians in Cambridge have been more diligent than those elsewhere, for it is the fact that at the British Museum these Cambridge cards are the only examples in the whole national collection, of cards used or made in England earlier than the Restoration. These, with those to be described now, or described in my last paper, are so far as I know the only English cards of the Elizabethan era in existence, or at least recorded. All readers of the half dozen or so of books³ which have been written on the history of playing cards must have been struck by the absence of information about early forms of English cards. Anyone curious to know what the cards were like that Shakespeare might have played with, or the court of James I used in the Trinity Lodge, will refer to these works in vain.

I am inclined to think that the discovery of playing cards is to be expected on the demolition of any ancient house. That the discovery is as a matter of fact relatively so rare, must be due to the almost incredible apathy of the house-breaker in the presence of discovered trifles. The difficulty of persuading, or successfully bribing, a labourer to preserve unusual objects found amongst his rubbish, is very astonishing upon a first experience of it, but its reality will be almost painfully familiar to members of this Society, and I need not stay to illustrate it.

I. *Cards from the Great Court of Trinity College.*

In my previous communication I described some cards found in the other, North, side of the Great Court, derived from two packs. I showed that both were of Norman (Rouen) design.

¹ Sayle, "Cambridge Fragments," *The Library*, Oct. 1911, p. 17.

² Willshire's *Catalogue*, pp. 116—117, F. 50—F. 53 inclusive.

³ e.g. those (in English) by Singer (1816), Chatto (1848), Taylor (1865), "Cavendish" (1879), van Rensselaer (1893) and others.

The cards of the first pack represented were closely similar to cards known to have been made by Pierre Maréchal, who worked at Rouen in 1567. Those of the second pack bore the name "Nicolas Beniere," a name famous as that of a family, or a succession, of *cartiers* working at Rouen for a century at least, from 1550 to 1650. And I pointed out at the same time that our English pack of cards, which has been maintained by a very conservative tradition almost unchanged in design from the 16th century to the present day, is directly derived, not from the cards of other French centres of cardmaking, but from those of Rouen. The cards more recently found and now to be described give added support to this view.

(1) Two cards. 85 × 46 mm. Each 4-fold, both in excellent condition. Seven of *Spades*, King of *Diamonds*. The King is cut close at the top edge and so measures 82 × 46 mm. It is very probably, but not certainly, from the same pack as the seven.

These were found on staircase L, M, or N, in 1908. (Plate I, Figure 2.)

This King of *Diamonds* is almost identical in design with that of the sheet of cards by Pierre Maréchal in the Departmental Archives at Rouen, and it belonged no doubt to a pack closely similar to that from which came the King of *Spades* found on the other side of the court and previously described. Maréchal worked at Rouen in 1567. A comparison of this King with the King of *Diamonds* in the modern pack will shew a detailed resemblance, which gains of course in completeness if a single headed pack of a generation ago is available.

(2) Three cards. 88 × 54 mm. 4-fold. King of *Diamonds*, fairly well preserved, bearing the initials I. P. on a plain shield at the left border near the bottom. Queen of *Spades* and four of *Diamonds* both fragmentary. Found on staircase Q in 1910.

These cards in every recognisable point are of the Rouen type. The King is closely similar in design to the smaller King of *Diamonds* just mentioned. The initials I. P. are doubtless those of an unknown Rouen *cartier*, or of an English

imitator. Knaves of this pack, or at least the Knave of Clubs, would almost certainly have borne the full name of their maker, and it is very unlucky that none were found.

(3) Two plain cards of different packs found also on Q staircase, Ten of *Spades* 86 × 45 mm., and Four of *Diamonds* 90 × 57 mm. Doubtless 17th century.

We now come to the most important find of all.

(4) Two cards. 87 × 54 mm. 4-fold. Plain backs. Knave of *Clubs* in very good condition, the maker's name "Stiven Bricket," on a scroll behind the knave's legs. King of *Hearts*, injured and discoloured. From staircase L, M, or N (1908). (Plate I, Figure 1.)

These cards are of the purest Rouen type. The Knave of Clubs, similar in every important feature to the Knave by Nicolas Beniere figured in my previous paper, is almost identical with that of the Pierre Maréchal pack at Rouen. The Knave of Clubs according to French custom (enforced by an ordinance of Louis XIII in 1613) bore the full name and device of the maker. In this Knave we have the full name, but as in that of Pierre Maréchal there is no device, unless the four-petalled rosette between the legs (given also by Maréchal) be one. The chief interest of this card is in the obviously English name of "Stiven Bricket": so far as I am aware this is the first name of an Elizabethan or Jacobean cardmaker made known to us, and perhaps this is the only existing and recorded card of that period which has an English origin. I have spoken previously of the importation of Rouen cards to England in the 16th century, and of the migration of Rouen *cartiers* to England for the avoidance of the Normandy export tax. The astonishingly close similarity in detail of this Knave of Clubs to that of the Beniere or Maréchal cards, shews that Stephen Brickett, as I suppose he would now be called, either closely copied the imported Rouen cards or even acquired a set of Rouen blocks and added his own name. In any case we have here another and decisive demonstration of the Norman origin of English playing cards.

(5) Seven cards. 86—87 mm. × 47—48 mm. 3-fold. Plain backs. All in good condition, but browned. Of *Hearts*, Ace, eight and four; of *Clubs*, Queen, six and four; of *Diamonds*, Knave only. Found on staircase Q, in 1910. (Plate I, Figures 3 and 4.)

These cards are quite unlike those of the type exported from Rouen to England, and I have not yet found any record of similar cards elsewhere. In point of design they might be assigned to the earlier part of the 16th century, though the design may well have lasted for a century or more. These particular cards are presumably not earlier than 1597, the date of the building in which they were buried. I am inclined to think that they represent cards of the Low Countries, brought perhaps to Cambridge by some student from abroad. They may have been made in France and possibly even in Rouen itself, which had a very large export trade and exported, as we shall see, special types of cards to different countries according to the needs or supposed tastes of their customers. Of all cards found hitherto in Trinity College, these are the only ones, without exception, which do not belong to the common type exported from Rouen to England. Whether they came from abroad or whether again they represent a spontaneous English creation, their type is extinct and has no counterpart in the national English pack.

Lastly may be mentioned some cards of later date.

(6) Eight cards. 95 × 64 mm. 4-fold. Plain backs. No court cards. On the back of the two of hearts is written "For Mr William Orde, at Trinity College, Cambridge." Its four corners are cut off and it appears to have been used as a label. Found in room 3, staircase M.

From their size and character these appear to be 18th or early 19th century cards. Their actual approximate date is given by Mr Orde's name—for William Orde was admitted a Pensioner in 1758. It is odd that there should be found another example in the Great Court of a playing card being used as a label or to bear a message. In my earlier papers I described two instances of this, and the facts point to a former



1.



2.



3.



4.

customary use of cards in this way. Mr Orde's friends can hardly have allowed him to mark the back of one card merely to shew his ownership of the pack, yet if the inscribed card only came to him as a label, it is unexplained why seven other cards apparently of the same pack were found with it¹.

In addition to these a few more modern cards, most being later than 1875, were found in various places.

II. *Cards from an old house in Cambridge.*

By the kindness of the Rev. F. G. Walker, your Secretary, I am allowed to describe here some early cards found recently upon the demolition of an old house in Cambridge. A workman collected a few of these from among the rubbish as toys for his children; of these some or all were given to another workman for a pot of beer, and from him they came ultimately to Mr Walker.

(5) Fifteen cards. 85 × 46 mm. 4-fold. Backs plain. Several are much damaged. Of Hearts, the King, Queen, Knave, ten, four and three; of Diamonds, the Knave and four; of Clubs, the Queen, nine and four; of Spades, the Queen, ten, nine and ace.

These cards do not call for detailed description, for they belong to a type already represented both in Paris and in London. They are identical in design with the cards preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale bearing the name of the card-

¹ Lady Dorothy Neville in *Under Five Reigns*, London, Methuen & Co., 1910, pp. 320—321, says that "visiting cards, it is probably not generally known, originated from ordinary playing cards, which were used as such as late as the close of the eighteenth century. A proof of this is that when, some time ago, certain repairs were being made at a house in Dean St, Soho, a few playing cards with names written on the back were found behind a marble chimney piece. One of the cards in question was inscribed 'Isaac Newton' and the house had been the residence of his father-in-law, Hogarth, in one of whose pictures of *Marriage à la mode*—Plate IV—several 'playing card' visiting cards may be seen lying on the floor on the right-hand side of the picture, one of them inscribed, 'Count Basset begs to no how Lady Squander slept last night.' As time went on specially devised visiting cards, with somewhat ornate calligraphy took the place of playing cards, and these in time developed into the small and simple pieces of pasteboard in use today."

maker Charles Dubois, and they are identical also with the cards seen in two cardmaker's sheets, not cut up into separate cards, which are in the British Museum. These two sheets bear the names of the makers, Robert Besniere and Nicholas Besniere respectively (Willshire's *Catalogue*, p. 114, F. 46). Unluckily, of the cards found in Cambridge, the Knaves of Clubs and Spades are lost and therefore no maker's name is preserved. The Besnieres, like Charles Dubois, were Rouen cardmakers, though these cards are entirely dissimilar in all important points of design from what we have already recognised as the type of Rouen cards exported to England, adopted here nationally, and maintained for three centuries in the design of the English pack.

The court cards bear the names of various historical and legendary personages. This circumstance again sharply distinguishes them from our Rouen-English cards, which have never borne names. Since these names are different from those more generally found in French cards they may be given here :

	<i>Kings</i>	<i>Queens</i>	<i>Knaves</i>
<i>Hearts</i>	Jullius Cezar	Helene	Siprien Roman
<i>Spades</i>	David	Bersabee	(maker's name)
<i>Diamonds</i>	Charles	Lucesse	Capitaine Metely
<i>Clubs</i>	Hector	Pentasele	Capitaine Vallante

The Dubois cards at Paris are described by Lacroix¹ as French cards of the beginning of the 16th century, and there is no doubt that their design is characteristic of that time. It does not however follow, in the absence of other evidence, that they are not to be placed many years later, for the long persistence of types is a constant phenomenon in the history of cardmaking. According again to Lacroix² "vers l'époque de la bataille de Pavis, et de la captivité du roi, l'influence des modes espagnoles et italiennes gagne le jeu de cartes. On remarque que le valet de pique, qui offre le nom seul du cartier

¹ Paul Lacroix, *Mœurs, Usages et Costumes au Moyen-Age et à l'époque de la Renaissance*, Paris 1874, 4th edit. p. 245. (The King of Spades and Queen of Hearts are figured at p. 255.)

² *ibid.* *Les Arts au Moyen Age et à l'époque de la Renaissance*. Paris, 2nd edit. pp. 245, 246. (The Knave of Spades is figured at p. 243.)

ressemble à Charles-Quint" [reference to figure shewing the Knave of Spades by Charles Dubois]. This fancied resemblance seen in a particular card of a particular pack is as untrustworthy as this author's sweeping and quite unsupported statement that Spanish and Italian fashions affected French cardmakers generally in the 16th century. Both may be dismissed as fantasies. In point of fact Charles Dubois was a Rouen card-maker of about 1659, and probably the cards actually figured by Lacroix were made nearly at that time, though with equal probability they represent a definite Rouen tradition of uncertain age, adopted by more than one Rouen *cartier*. These Dubois cards at Paris are reproduced in a coloured plate Vol. I, p. 102 in Mons. D'Allemagne's sumptuous work¹.

Indeed, as we have seen, the similar cards in sheets at the British Museum bear the Rouen maker's name Besniere. Of the two sheets there, one is printed from the block in black outline only, ready for colouring; the other is printed, coloured, and ready for cutting up into separate cards. The plain sheet is by Robert Besniere, as the scroll on the Knave of Spades shews, and the initials R. B. within a small shield on the Knave of Clubs. This shield is shewn in the Dubois cards, but according to D'Allemagne's illustrations it bears no initials. The coloured sheet similarly bears the name Nicolas Besniere and the initials N. B. Both are assigned by Willshire to the period 1525-50 during which one of the *cartiers* called Robert Besniere worked at Rouen. From the exact similarity of the two sheets, and their close association, they may be supposed to be contemporaneous, and it would seem to be more reasonable to assign them to a period 1640-1650 when we know that both a Robert and a Nicolas Besniere were working simultaneously at Rouen. But so many *cartiers* called Besniere or Beniere worked at Rouen between 1550 and 1650 that a final decision is difficult.

In assigning so early a date as 1525-50 to these cards, Dr Willshire simply follows the lead, and almost the language, of Lacroix. He says confidently that "the influence of Spanish and Italian types may be seen here in the designs" as though

¹ Henry-René D'Allemagne, *Les Cartes à Jouer*. 2 vols. Paris 1906.

such influence had existed and was well known, and he attributes the cards "to the second quarter of the sixteenth century, or to about the time of the battle of Pavia, fought in the early part of 1525, near that town, between the French and the Imperialists: The former were defeated, and their King, François Premier, after fighting with great valour, was obliged at last to surrender himself a prisoner." Dr Willshire does not venture to explain why Rouen cardmakers should choose to commemorate for many years afterwards the French defeat at Pavia, by adopting a southern or an Imperial design, and by placing (as he does not notice) the double headed Imperial eagle on the shield borne by the King of Hearts. The King of Diamonds indeed shews a shield in which the Imperial arms actually impale those of France Modern. We have seen that the Paris Dubois cards are most probably to be placed near 1650, and this is an additional reason for assigning the British Museum Besnieres cards to 1650 as we have done already on other grounds. At all events they are far enough removed from the Battle of Pavia.

D'Allemagne in illustrating and describing the Dubois cards at Paris makes no reference to Willshire's view, or to the British Museum sheets, of whose existence he was probably unaware. He suggests that these cards were a special type made by Rouen cardmakers—and this agrees with the fact that the Besnieres also made them—and that they were probably destined for the Germanic countries, and so accounts for the special nature of the design and the presence of the Imperial eagle. "Au surplus," he says, "les valets eux-mêmes ont une allure tant soit peu germanique qui vient à l'appui de notre supposition¹." Certainly the "allure" of all these figures cut by French wood-engravers, if we are to depend upon it at all, we may just as easily suppose with D'Allemagne to be Germanic, as with Lacroix to be Spanish or Italian. For my own part I am not able to see that they are other than French.

D'Allemagne's view that this type of Rouen cards was specially manufactured for export to Germanic countries has much stronger support,—which he forgets to claim,—and this

¹ *loc. cit.* p. 102.

is to be found in the existence at Paris of a pack based in every detail upon these Rouen cards, and known to have been made by one Nicolas Bodet, at Brussels, in about 1750. He reproduces these (vol. II, p. 459) and well remarks that they provide a striking instance of the impossibility of dating cards when unsigned, so similar are these to the Dubois cards of at least a century earlier. These Brussels cards bear the same mythical and historical names on their Kings, Queens and Knaves.

It may be right to suppose with D'Allemagne that the Imperial eagle was added to these cards by the Rouen makers in compliment to their customers abroad¹. But indeed a much simpler explanation may be offered to account for the armorial eagle here. It is borne by the King of Hearts, in these cards named "Julius Caesar," and by the King of Diamonds, called "Charles" for Charlemagne, and to both an Imperial symbol is obviously appropriate. It is curious that it should not have been noticed by D'Allemagne that the sign of the Imperial eagle is by no means confined to this type of exported Rouen cards. It is indeed almost uncommon not to find it in one shape or another borne by a King in French packs made at various centres and in different centuries. It occurs once alone, and twice impaled by France Modern, in the cards at Paris assigned to the end of the 15th century, figured by Merlin² on the Kings named Charlemagne and Julius Caesar respectively, and it occurs on part of the dress and elsewhere in at least one of the Kings in no less than nineteen of the packs figured by D'Allemagne, of dates ranging from the 15th to the end of the 18th century, and representing the designs of almost all the chief centres of French cardmaking. Among these the crowned eagle is almost always found somewhere in the design for the King of Hearts, who is almost always named Charles, bears an

¹ Another instance, from a different branch of wood-engraving, of the association of the Austrian and Bourbon arms, also probably for the purposes of international trade, may be seen on the title page of *Eyn neue künstlich moetdelboech* printed by Peter Quentel at Cologne in 1530, where the double headed eagle appears under an imperial crown side by side with the three fleur-de-lis of France Modern under a royal crown.

² Merlin, *Origine des Cartes à jouer*. Paris 1869. Plate G.

orb and sceptre, and represents Charlemagne. It is seen occasionally also associated with a King of other suits, and in several instances may be seen in the case of a Knave.

There is abundant evidence of the enormous manufacture of cards at Rouen for export to foreign countries from the 16th century onwards. In 1585 letters patent reduced the duty on exported cards from Rouen for Spain, Flanders, and England, to 8 deniers, on those for Portugal to 6 deniers, and on those for Switzerland to 3 deniers¹. In 1701 a petition to the Syndics of Commerce by the Rouen *cartiers* speaks of Rouen as exporting more cards than all the other towns of France together, and of the reputation of Rouen cards as well known in Spain, Sweden, Muscovy, Switzerland, Denmark, England, Scotland and above all in Flanders².

As we should expect, the cards made at Rouen for export to foreign countries were adapted in design by the cardmakers to suit the special requirements or tastes of their customers abroad in particular foreign markets. For Spain, the Spanish suit marks of swords, sticks, cups, and coins were added in place of the French marks, though the designs remained strongly Rouennais. D'Allemagne (II, p. 116) figures such a pack made by Jehan Vumier in 1508. To Flanders we have seen that cards like those made by the Benieres and Dubois were sent, and of these the type subsisted unchanged at least long enough to appear in the cards of home manufacture at Brussels as late as 1750. In these cards mythical and historical names were given to the court characters, and the names are different from those common in cards made and used in France. The examples of these found in Cambridge and the subject of these remarks, were brought here, it is most easily supposed, by a student or traveller from the Low Countries, or they may have been re-exported to King's Lynn.

For direct export to England, lastly, another special design was made at Rouen, and this again has been illustrated by the other cards found in Cambridge. These imported cards settled

¹ *Memoriaux de la Cour des Aides de Normandie* 1585 (D'Allemagne, II, p. 118).

² D'Allemagne, *loc. cit.*

for us the character of our national pack, and no indigenous English designs, if there have been any, have at any time seriously challenged the supremacy of the Rouen type. For England the Rouen *cartiers* decided—or their customers here decided—that mythical and historical names for the court cards were unsuitable, and we have accordingly never had them. It would be interesting to know what reasons determined this omission, or determined any of the other features of the cards made for England, but this question is one which is not very likely now to be answered.