

The Game of Chap-Ji-Ki.

Introduction.

A few words on the peculiar form of gambling propensity called the game of Chap-Ji-Ki, or the Chap-Ji-Ki, before it passes away out of men's mind and becomes one of the dead ghosts of a forgotten past, may not be out of place or devoid of interest even to the general public. The game owed its success and long immunity from punishment to the originality and organising powers of its promoters. It broke up in 1896 when the Government began to hustle and harry the gamesters in real earnest. The Chinese ladies of Singapore found then they could not give their little private card parties in safety yet few women gambled more fiercely or played for higher stakes than these Chinese whilst the fever lasted. Any one who has read of the universal high playing amongst English ladies at Vaux Hall in the days of the restoration of Charles II. will have some faint idea of how passionately absorbed the Chinese women of Singapore were in this new form of gambling. In the hope that a wider knowledge of this game may be generally useful and of special service to others, this little sketch is drawn up.

Gambling is perhaps the commonest form of amusement known to the Chinese. Its speculative character, its prospects of loss or profit, appeal irresistibly to his genius. Out-door sports have little attraction for him. A mild kick at the flying shuttle cock, a languid dallying with a struggling kite is quite enough for him; when heavy physical exertion is indulged in, be sure there is some utilitarian object in view—a prize in the gymnastic ring or perhaps honours in the military school. From the Chinese point of view, as with us, gambling (whether it be in the form of cards, dominoes, fan-tan, or dice) is *per se* no vice. It is only the abuse and misuse of gambling that, to a Chinese mind, constitutes an offence. One's length of days here, is to his mind, but a long game where the cards are always changing. Gambling seems to clear his mind and brace his nerves. It is training ground to him for the real gamble of



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