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"AMUSEMENTS IN COLONIAL VIRGINIA"

A THESIS PRESENTED AT THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND  
MARY AS A PARTIAL REQUIREMENT FOR  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

-- BY --

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TO THE DEGREE COMMITTEE:

This is to certify that I have examined the attached  
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I  approve  
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(No comments)

Signed

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Date

8-31-29

TL

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## AMUSEMENTS IN COLONIAL VIRGINIA

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The pleasures, recreation, and glorious hospitality of Colonial Virginia have been heralded in novel and journal and create a real folk-lore. This paper is an effort to summarize the pursuits of our ancestors in search of amusement. Economic conditions inevitably affected the habits of the people. A few landmarks are given to make conditions more intelligible. Up to 1630 we judge the planter was concerned with affairs of food, shelter, and safety. By 1660 the tobacco industry was flourishing. Virginia planters were prosperous. Under the Navigation Acts the small planter suffered especially. Between 1685 and 1700 a new solidarity of social structure developed. At the end of this time the frontier line was at the fall line, no more along the coast. The eighteenth century was a golden age of plenty and pleasure. Big manor houses were built. Plantations were cared for by dozens of servants. Costly furniture, silver, and clothes were common. Coaches supplanted rude means of travel. The blooded horse was the gentleman's pride. Governor Fauquier is said to have set Virginia mad on the subject of pleasure, especially gambling.

Through these stages we find the Virginia planter amused the guests in his home in a score of ways. He mingled with his neighbors at church, at fairs, and around the banquet table. The gentlemen enjoyed the hunt, the cheering glass, the gaming table, the cock-fight, and most of all the horse-race.

The far famed hospitality of old Virginia has been recounted to us on every side. It is interesting to see that it was one of the facts most frequently recorded by travellers in the early days. Durand, a Huguenot refugee passing through several counties on foot, records: "One travels very comfortably and cheap in this country. There are no inns, but everywhere I was well received. The country people cheerfully gave me to eat and drink of whatever they had, and if I slept in some house where they had horses they were lent to me to make half of my next day's journey." (\*) Hugh Jones, who attributes to the Virginia planter a more or less idle, lazy life, says, "No people can entertain their friends with better cheer and welcome; and strangers and travelers are here treated in the most free, plentiful, and hospitable manner; so that few inns or ordinaries on the road are sufficient". (#)

(\*) Durand, A Frenchman in Virginia. The Memoirs of a Huguenot Refugee, 1686

(#) Hugh Jones, Present State of Virginia, 1724

The historian Beverley is enthusiastic on this subject. He says, "The inhabitants are very courteous to travelers, who need no other recommendation, but the being human creatures. A stranger has no more to do but to enquire upon the road, where any gentlemen or good housekeeper lives, and there he may depend upon being received with hospitality. This good nature is so general among their people, that the gentry, when they go abroad order their principal servants to entertain all visitors, with everything the plantation affords. And the poor planters, who have but one bed, will very often sit up or lie upon a form or couch all night, to make room for a weary traveler, to repose himself after his journey." (§)

Since this was the attitude toward the stranger, it is not surprising to find a law requiring the inn-keeper to notify persons upon their arrival, if he expected to make a charge, that "everyone shall be reputed to entertayne those of curtesie with whom they make not a certain agreement." (&)

It was not always a lone traveler who descended thus unannounced upon the generous planter. Durand records that once in a company of twenty, headed by Mr. Wormeley, they came to Colonel Fitzhugh's just before Christmas. This gentleman rose nobly to the occasion. "The Colonel's accomodations were, however, so ample that the company gave him no trouble at all;

(§)Beverley, History and Present State of Virginia, 1720

(&)Hening, Statutes at Large, vol.11, p.192.

we were all supplied with beds, though we had indeed to double up." (\*)

They were furnished good wine, food, and a Christmas entertainment.

Durand continues, "He called in three fiddlers, a clown, a tight rope dancer and an acrobatic tumbler, and gave us all the divertisement one could wish..... The frolic continued into the afternoon of the second day. He .....brought a quantity of wine and punch to the shore, there to serve a parting glass."

This scale of hospitality would have proved a tax on most planters at that date (1686), since the houses were small until the eighteenth century. Durand describes most of the houses as having two rooms on the ground floor and one or two above. Governor Berkeley's mansion at Green Springs contained six rooms at a time when he kept seventy horses.

If this then was the lot of a passer-by, the visit of friends was more delightful. They seem to have been entertained by the month as a matter of course and counted in ~~by~~ tens. Distance and the difficulty of transportation were determining factors in the length of the stay. It was a common practice to make visiting tours, going from one friend to another. A delightful example of this is given in the "Journal of A Young Lady of Virginia. This young lady describes her visit to the

(\*)Durand, A Frenchman in Virginia The Memoirs of a Huguenot Refugee, 1686

Lees and the Washingtons from September 16 until November 12, 1782 and makes no mention of going home. (")

The happy groups thus gathered were entertained in sundry ways. The first means was the sumptuous meals. The laden boards seem to have creaked and moaned their way down through the generations. The feast of the day was served at two o'clock. Meat and game of many kinds, wines, ciders and beer, and "desserts of infinite variety" were famous. On special occasions meals were often served to fifty and a hundred guests.

When the gentlemen dined alone the glasses were emptied more freely. Colonel Adam Stephen, in writing to George Washington in 1755, said, "I had the honor to dine at the head of 24 fine Gentlemen yesterday. We had an extremely Good dinner, and after drinking the Royal Healths in a Huff and a Huzza at every Health we pass'd an hour in Singing and taking a cheerful glass. We then amus'd ourselves with acting part of a play, and spending the night in mirth, Jollity and Dancing. We parted very affectionately at 12 o'clock, remembering all absent Friends." (').

From the "Journal of a Young Lady of Virginia" a similar illustration is found. "The Gentlemen dined today at Mr. Masenbird's.....We have supped, and the gentlemen are not returned yet. Lucy and myself are in a peck of trouble for

(")Journal of a Young Lady of Virginia, 1782, Dalrymple

(')Col. Adam Stephen's Letters to Washington, F. Cumberland's "Letters to Washington", 1755.

fear they should return drunk.....Both tipsy!"

Even an occasion such as a funeral brought numbers of people and necessitated the preparation of food and drink in quantity. "At one occurring in 1667, it required 22 gallons of cider, twenty four of beer, and five of brandy to assuage the mourners thirst. A whole ox and a half dozen sheep were not infrequently roasted to satisfy their hunger."(\$)

The wedding festival was a joyous occasion and the feast a memorable one. Guests came down rivers and over hills. They gathered only occasionally and they were in no hurry to go home. The celebration lasted sometimes one and two weeks. Near neighbors and relatives took turns in feasting the gay party.

One Frenchman gives an account of "An Overseer's Wedding". The groom had been an indentured servant, served his time, and was marrying a girl of a "good" family.

"The (West) Indians<sup>(\*)</sup> make a great festival of a wedding. There were at least 100 persons invited, several of them of good estate, and some ladies, well dressed and good to look upon.....The feast was spread under the trees..... We were 80 at the first table and were served so abundantly of meat of all sorts that I am sure there was enough for a regiment of 500 men.....

"The (West) Indians eat almost no bread and seldom drink during a meal, but afterwards they do nothing else. During the rest of the day and all night the company drank, smoked, sang, and danced. They had no wine: their liquors were beer, cider,

(\$) Bruce, History of Colonial Virginia, Vol. 1, 1607-1763

(\*NOTE: Term used referring to residents of Gloucester County; probably caused by author's difficulty with English.

Durand, A Frenchman in Virginia

and punch.....It is the custom of the country to serve only one meal on these occasions, at two o'clock in the afternoon. They do not provide beds for the men, those available being reserved for the women and girls; so about midnight after I had seen the party in full frolic.....The frolic lasted all night. When it was day I got up and found the whole company stretched out like dead men". (\*)

However, not all of life was spent in feasting and drinking. Often the family group and guests enjoyed quiet days together. Beverley says that they enjoyed beautiful walks and nature study in the gardens. (‰) Miss Dalrymple verifies this. She says, "I have been filling out tea, and after that we took a walk to the river by moonlight. The garden extends to the river". This journalist records a walk "to the river" or "in the garden" almost every day. (")

Riding and driving were also frequently indulged in. The chariot, the coach, the phaeton, and a variety of conveyances became common in the eighteenth century but previous to that travel was principally by boat or on horseback. Washington stands out as a lover of these activities. Aside from his hunting his diary shows almost every day two out of the three pleasures noted, i. e., riding, driving or walking. He was noted for his beautiful horses and his grooms for their extreme care of them.

When the party gathered about the fire at night reading aloud, sewing - usually fancy work - and cards, - a favorite game

Durand, A Frenchman in Virginia

(\*) Note: Practice of people of overseers' class

(‰) Beverley, History and Present State of Virginia, 1720.

(") Journal of a Young Lady of Virginia, 1782, Dalrymple

being put - sped away the hours. Nor was it infrequent that lively games of "Hide the thimble", "Grind the bottle", etc. found a place. Jefferson, in describing a visit to the Dandriges says that the time was spent "in junketing (\*), dancing and high jinks of all sorts". (-) What high jinks may have amounted to is uncertain, but at other places we find references to a variety of pranks and scaring people.

Music was often the evening pastime. The instruments were banjos, fiddles, pianofortes, spinnets and harpiscords. Mr. Wilson Miles Cary in "Life in Williamsburg" says that the music was most unscientific but "those good people took as much pleasure in the strumming of their rosy belles as we do in the really fine music of the best pianists." (&)<sup>(\*)</sup> Singing was also popular. But, the music which was close to the heart of the youth was the scraping of the old negro's fiddle.

"Harry, the fiddler, is sent for, and we are going to dance.....We were entertained last night in the usual way - dancing" and so on read the diaries of many besides this fair guest to the Lees. (") Grand old homes were noted for their balls and on festive occasions guests came from far and near. The ball began early and lasted far into or through the night. The popularity of the dance is also testified to by the advertisements of dancing teachers.

(\*)Note: picnicing

(-) Life and Letters of Jefferson, Hirst.

(&) Sally Cary, W. M. Cary

(") Journal of a Young Lady of Virginia

"Charles Stagg, an actor and dancing master was manager of what was probably the first theatre in America in Williamsburg, which was built for him about 1717. He appears to have also had a bowling green and garden adjoining the theatre." Baronne de Graffenreidt succeeded him, teaching only dancing. Colonel William Byrd, II, recommended her teaching to Sir. John Randolph.

"This is to give notice to all Gentlemen and Ladies that Mrs. Barbara De graffenreidt intends to have a Ball on Tuesday, the 26th of next April, and an Assembly on the 27th in Williamsburg: For which Tickets will be delivered out at her House.'" (2)

A lodger at Mr. Finnie's in Williamsburg advertised in 1752 to begin teaching as soon as he had a reasonable number of scholars. (3) Dances for which tickets were sold must have been profitable.

"At the Court House, in Williamsburg, on Thursday, the 31st of October, I purpose to have a Ball for my scholars; such Gentlemen and Ladies who are pleased to favour me with their Company, may have Tickets at Half a Pistole each, at Mr. Finnie's or from their most obedient humble servant,  
(Signed) Richard Coventon.

"N. B. The Doors will be open at six o'clock". (3)

Various public occasions gave rise to balls and accompanying mirth. Notable among these was the meeting of

(2) Virginia Historical Magazine, Vol. IX, p. 240

(3) William & Mary College Quarterly, XII, p. 211 & p. 164

the Assembly in Williamsburg.

"Notice is hereby given to the Ladies and Gentlemen, That the subscriber purposes to have a Ball, at the Appollo in Williamsburg, once every week, during the sitting of the General Assembly and Court. (Signed) Alexander Firmie February 27, 1752." (3)(~~F~~)

At about this time a note concerning Colonel Cary, father of the far-famed Sally Cary, who later married George William Fairfax of Belvoir, is interesting:

"Being a member of the House of Burgesses, his family passed much of their time during the Assembly in Williamsburg where the College of William & Mary presented a fine field for the latent social talents of four maidens in their teens."(&)

The walls of the Apollo and the Raleigh echoed with softer words than political debate. One incident on record is made by Jefferson in a letter to John Page, 1763, after he had blundered in a declaration of his affections to Belinda.

"Last night as merry as agreeable company and dancing with Belinda in the Apollo could make me, I never could have thought the succeeding sun would have seen me so wretched as I am now!" (-)

Other occasions for rejoicing were furnished in celebrating the birthday of reigning sovereigns and members of the royal family. The birthnight ball was preceded by parades and

(3) William & Mary College Quarterly , XII, p. 209

(~~1~~) Virginia Gazette

(&) Sally Cary by Wilson Miles Cary

(-) Hirst: Life and Letters of Jefferson

enlivened with fireworks. On November 17, 1752 the celebration of the birthday of George II is recorded in the Virginia Gazette:

"Friday last being the anniversary of His Majesty's Birthday, the evening the whole city was illuminated. There was a Ball and a very elegant Entertainment, at the Palace, where were present the Emperor and the Empress of the Cherokees nation, with their son, the young Prince and a brilliant appearance of Ladies and Gentlemen; several beautiful fireworks were exhibited in Palace Street, by Mr. Hallam, Manager of the Theatre in this city, and the Evening concluded with every demonstration of our Zeal and Loyalty" (3) (1)

During and after the Revolution this tribute was paid to Washington. In the days of his presidency it came to be a "national festival". (4)

"On the 22nd February, 1779, the students of William & Mary College, and most of the respectable inhabitants of Williamsburg prepared a subscription paper for celebrating Washington's birthnight, and the pleasure of presenting it was confided to certain students." (3) (5)....."Governor Henry refused permission for this event because the country was in a state of war. "The ball, nevertheless, was given at the Raleigh." a desire to fire a cannon salute caused the enthusiasts to endeavor to borrow a cannon from a nearby repair

- (3) William & Mary College Quarterly, Vol. XIII, p. 14 *notice from*  
 (1) Virginia Gazette  
 (4) Recollections and Private Memoirs of Washington, G.W.P. Custis  
 (3) William & Mary College Quarterly, Vol. XXI, p. 134  
 (5) Journal of David Meade Randolph, copied from Southern Literary Messenger

shop. Soldiers passing by reported this and controversy arose with the Captain, but, finally, "the Captain retreated with his men, and the evening closed with great joy."

Meeting at the church on Sunday served for more than religious worship. All free people were required to be present. Before and after services they visited and exchanged news in a way more effective than the newspaper. In spite of the fact that the laws (x) required the day to be kept holy and forbid journeying except in case of necessity, the hat box of maidens on a visiting tour probably made many an exchange of coach and merry parties gathered for dinner.

Occasionally for amusement the members of the household would act part or all of some play. In reply to Mrs. Fairfax's account of such an occasion Washington wrote to her September 25, 1758 from the encampment on the frontier, "I should think our time more agreeably spent, believe me, in playing a part in Cato with the company you mention."(&)

The popularity of the Theatre in Williamsburg is well known. Parts of an advertisement of "The Merchant of Venice" and "Sham Doctor", August 21, 1752 are amusing. "To begin at six o'clock", "The Ladies are desired to give timely notice to Mr. Hallam, at Mr. Fishes's for their places in the Boxes, and on the Day of performance to send the servants early to keep them, in order to prevent trouble and disappointment."<sup>(o)</sup>

(x) Statutes at Large, Hening, Vol. I, p. 434

(&) Sally Cary, Wilson Miles Cary

(o) *William and Mary College Quarterly*, Vol. VIII, p. 8.

Companies of comedians travelled about the State playing in courthouses, barns, and any available space. Stops at Hobb's Hole, Petersburg, and Fredericksburg were popular. Whenever possible they arrived at the time of the fairs to gain a large audience.

"Williamsburg, April 30, 1752.

"The company of comedians from the new Theatre at Williamsburg, propose playing at Hobbs' Hole from the 10th of May to the 24th, from thence they intend to proceed to Fredericksburg, to play during the continuance of June Fair."

(1) (2)

Fairs were highly important as neighborhood events. They were originally planned for business and trade, "for vending of all manner of cattle, victuals, provisions, goods, wares and merchandises whatsoever." (x) Fairs were authorized for Jamestown (1655), Williamsburg (1705), Fredericksburg (1738), Richmond (1752) and other communities of moderate size to meet twice each year.

The development of the recreational side of fairs is seen in a notice in the Virginia Gazette of the Williamsburg fair in 1737. "The fair is to hold three days and there will be horse racing and a variety of diversions every day, and the following prizes to be contended for. A good hat to be cudgelled(#)

(1) Virginia Gazette *quoted in*

(2) Virginia Historical Magazine, vol. 35, p. 295

(x) Statutes at Large, Henning, vol. V, p. 82

(#) Fighting with small clubs

for. A saddle to be run for - a handsome bridle for the horse which comes in second and a good whip for the third. A pair of silver buckles to be run for, by men, from the College to the Capitol - a pair of shoes to him that comes in second, a pair of gloves to the third. A pair of pumps to be danced for by men. A handsome firelock to be exercised for. A pig with his tail soaped to be run after and given to the person that catches him and lifts him off the ground by his tail." (a) (1)

Field days had amusements closely related to those of the fair. In 1691 Governor Sir Francis Nicholson announced a day of sport with prizes. "To the Sheriff of Surry Co. I desire that you give public notice that I will give first and second prizes to be shott for, wrasttled, play at backwoods, and run for by horse and foott, to begin on the 22nd day of April next, St. George's day, being Saturday, all which prizes are to be shott for, etc. by the better sort of Virginians onely, who are Batchelors." The governor received thanks from these batchelors for "instituting annual games for the training of young men in manly exercise and feats of activity" (a)

In 1736 Mr. Augustus Graham is said to have fostered a most successful field day so that a subscription entertainment of the same nature was planned the next year at Old Field

(a) Colonial Virginia, p. 153, Mary Newton Stanard: *ex tract from*  
 (1) Virginia Gazette  
 (a) Colonial Virginia, p. 156

in Hanover County. We find the same events with some additions here. (1) (1)

Twenty fiddlers to enter a contest. "After the prize is won they are all to play together, and each a different tune, and to be treated by the company". "That a handsome entertainment be provided for subscribers and their wives." "That a quire of ballads be sung for by a number of songsters, all of them to have sufficient liquor to clear their windpipes." "That a pair of handsome silk stockings of one Pistole value be given to the handsomest young county maid that appears in the Field."

On occasions such as court day and muster day games and contests were also common. Court days became known for rough contests such as gouging, for horseplay and drunken bouts. So well known were disorders of these days that slaves planned to make their escape at this time. Carousing was not only practiced in the lowest classes, but among many of the better planters. In order to prevent complications at that time any justice of peace who was drunk on court day was fined and removed from office. (x)

The early settler was accustomed to free drinking at all times. Imported wines could be readily secured while home made cider, beer, and rum were common. Some social distinctions were measured in the choice of drink. Excessive drinking was common with certain people. Even ministers were given to linger too long at the wassail bowl. A minister who continuously became

(1) Virginia Gazette *in*

(1) Fiske: Old Virginia and Her Neighbors, vol. 11, p. 240

(x) Statutes at Large, Henning *Vol. II. p. 384*

was declared "incapable of officiating in any office or ministerial function." (x) A strange pride or martyrdom caused the last one under the table to be considered the finest fellow. Frequent results of this habit were the losses of the gaming table and ruin of homes. Laws to regulate habits of drinking were passed at almost every assembly beginning in 1619. Efforts to make church wardens and commanders of plantations responsible for the weak were made in successive laws. The flagrancy of many offenses is apt to cause us to believe all planters were drunkards, which was not true. There were few, however, who failed to enjoy the social cup.

Some customs in drinking are recorded by a French traveller in Gloucester County, Virginia, in 1686. "The custom of the country requires one to drink freely; indeed, even when there were as many as twenty in company they all drank the health of a stranger in turn and I had to return the compliment to each....Until they are drunk these people usually let me drink as I wished and this I merely kissed the glass, but once they were fairly soaked they insisted on the rigor of the etiquette." (\*)

The frontiersman was justly famous for his skill in marksmanship. The joy of the hunt and chase was not lessened

(x) Statutes at Large, Henning, Vol. 11, p. 384

(\*) A Frenchman in Virginia, The Memoirs of a Huguenot Refugee, Durand



and have seen live ones taken out of traps, and dragged at a horse's tail." (r) Setting baited guns for wolves was also common. As an incentive for hunting wolves rewards, - fifty pounds of tobacco for a young wolf and one hundred for an old one - were offered.

Bears were found in large numbers. Their haunts were especially the vicinity of the Dismal Swamp and in the mountains but they were found in the older part of the colony until 1683 (§) A number of bears were killed on the hunt, which usually took place in the Fall when bears were fat and lazy or even in their dens for the winter sleep. The element of danger added zest to this form of hunting.

The deer was a favorite object of the hunt. Deer were shy and had to be skilfully approached. The hunter approached hidden behind his horse or made a screen of bushes. Very often he hid near the water supply or feeding place and waited for the deer to come. Then again servants and dogs would be sent out to round up the deer. There was pride in a table well supplied with deer meat, but often deer were slaughtered with no further purpose than the chase. Therefore, by 1738 seasons were set for hunting deer. (x)

Wild horses presented a challenge to sportsmen since the chase was apt to be lively and if the prize could be tamed it was of value. In 1700 there seem to have been numbers of these

(r) Beverley, History and Present State of Virginia, 1720

(§) Bruce, History of Virginia, P. 22

(x) Hening, Statutes at Large, Vol. V, p. 62

small horses. They were commonly hunted in the spring when they were fat from eating grass. The huntsman used a grain fed horse and sometimes dogs. The hazards were the pleasure of the hunt and sullen little brutes which often would not be tamed against possible loss of a good horse.

The Indian method of fire hunting was used by the settler, but soon condemned. This consisted of building a circle of fire. Indians sometimes made a circle five or six miles in compass, which, as it closed in, drove the game into a small space. The hunter moved into the circle and slaughtered everything. Only the skins and a small portion of the meat were used. In 1738 a penalty of 20 shillings was imposed on whites for fire-hunting and Indians found participating were to be deprived of their guns. (x)

Fox hunting is somehow stamped as the highest delight of Virginians in the chase. It did not assume its gayest features in early times while foxes were hunted in the class with opossums and raccoon. A festive chase behind trained hounds was apparently not practiced until 1730 and later. Washington is looked to as the chief of fox hunters. He was a typical lover of this sport, who spared no effort to have his hunt full of zest.

Enthusiasts kept fine hounds trained for the hunt. Washington had hounds which Lafayette sent over after 1783.

(x) Hening, Statutes at Large, Vol. V, p. 62

They were given fanciful names: Sweetlips, Vulcan, Singer, Truelove, etc., in strange contrast to their reputation for fierceness.

Fox hunts occurred several times a week. On the day of the hunt breakfasts were by candlelight, by dawn the hunt was under way and often the fox started before sunrise. Sturdy riders rode up to the hounds while ladies and timid riders followed roads and bridle paths.

When the hunt was over the party returned to a "well spread board" and over the wine glass recounted the exploits of the day. The evening was taken up with a ball or other entertainment.

There is an interesting letter by the Botanist Clayton in 1739 to Samuel Durrent, Manager of his estate at Hawkhurst in Kent, England, answering an inquiry from there, which reads: "Now the Gentlemen here that follow the sport place most of their diversion in shooting deer; w<sup>h</sup>ch they perform in this manner, they go out early in the morning and being pritty certain of the place where the deer frequents they send their servants w<sup>h</sup>th dogs to drive 'em out and so shoot 'em running, The Deer are very swift of foot, larger and longer legged than the English fallow Deer and less than the red Deer, the diversion of shooting Turkeys is only to be had in the upper parts of the Countrey where the woods are of a very large extent and but few settlements as yet tho' they increase daily. Some hunt the foxes w<sup>h</sup>th hounds as you do in England, the shooting of water fowl is performed too in the same manner w<sup>h</sup>th a

water sp aniel, as w' th you, and of Partridges; and also the hunting our hares with small dogs, who drive 'em presently into the hollow of a tree, then we either cut 'em out w' th an Ax or fill the hole w' th old dead leaves and set fire to 'em, the smoke of w' ch suffocates the hare and she drops down; the bears, Panthers, Buffaloes and Elks and wild cats are only to be found among the mountains and desert parts of the country where there are as yet but few inhabitants and the hunting there is very toilsome and laborious and sometimes dangerous. Yet the common sort of people who live among the mountains kill great quantities of Bears every year; but the greatest destruction of 'em is made in the beginning of the Winter when the bears lay themselves to sleep in the caves and holes among rocks of the mountains at w' ch time the people go to the mouth of the cave w' th their guns loaded and shoot 'em as they lye in their dens. We have also great plenty and variety of fish w' ch we take with nets and by Angling as is practiced in England, and now I hope I have satisfied the Gentlemen's curiosity, at least I have done my endeavor towards it, as much as the compass of a letter will allow of and will be very glad in y' r next to know his name." (2)

As indicated in the summary above, fishing was a way of spending pleasant and profitable hours. The catch was

made by use of nets, seines, trolls, and spears. But, the most popular method of fishing was angling. Michel in his journal mentions this, "Most of them are caught with the hook or the spear, as I know from personal experience, for when I went out several times with the line I was surprised that I could pull out one fish after another.....We always had our harpoons and guns with us when we went out fishing, and when fish came near we shot them or harpooned them." (s)

Fishing at night with a light in the boat was popular but quantities of fish were killed beyond the need. This, and other abuses, gave rise to laws similar to one from Middlesex County, 1678: "Whereas several of ye inhabitants of this county have complained agt. ye excessive and imoderate striking and destroying of Fish by some fue of ye Inhabitants.....Whereby they also wound foure times ye quantitye that they take.....if a timely remedy be not applyed.....ye fishing with hooks and lines will be thereby spoyled to ye great hurte and grievance of most of ye inhabitants of this county." (x)

Was the love of the game of chance and backing of lottery schemes of early Virginians anything more than a recording of the pioneer spirit - a willingness to take a

(s) Journal of Francis Louis Michel - a traveler from Berne, Switzerland, in Virginia October 1701-1702. *V.H.M. Vol. XIII*  
 (x) Virginia Historical Magazine, Vol. VIII, p. 186

chance? A colossal chance was taken by any man who crossed the ocean in boats of the seventeenth century, yet another in meeting conditions of a new land and climate, new neighbors, beasts of the forest, and unknown diseases. Whether the cause of this step was bravery, religious fervor, or sheer dare-deviltry, the trait was there and it is small wonder that these men and their descendents should flock to a lottery or stake all on a game of cards.

Tyson states that "Lotteries are perhaps as old as our civilization, that they were used in Rome, and that the christian world is indebted to the republic of Genoa for suggesting the idea of the lottery as a measure of finance". (v)

The system was used in England as a means of voluntary taxation. In this connection it is interesting to note that the project for the colony in Virginia was supported by the First Great Lottery in 1612, and a Second Great Lottery in 1615.

Alexander Brown gives two extracts in reference to the lottery of 1612. The first from the Grocers' Record reads, "This day upon the special motion and request of Sir Thomas Smythe, Kt, it is consented and agreed that this company will adventure £ 62,10 for V<sup>o</sup> lotts in the Lotterye for Virginia, and that the sayd adventure shall be made by Wardens with the Comen Goodes of this House and that the benefitt happening shall be whollye employed to the use of this House & Companye." And the second is<sup>a</sup> reference from Howes Chronicles. "The King's Majestie in special favor for the present plantation of English

(v)Tyson: A Brief Survey of the Great Extent and Evil Tendencies of the Lottery System. Lecture delivered in Philadelphia in 1833

Collonies in Virginia, granted a liberall Lottery, in which was contained five thousand pounds in prizes certayne, besides rewards of casualtie and began to be drawne, in a new built house at the West end of Paul's at 29 of June 1612. But of which Lottery, for want of filling uppe the number of lots, there were taken out and throwne away three score thousande blankes, without abating of any one prize; and by the twentieth of July, all was drawne and finished. This Lottery was so plainly carryed and honestly performed that it gave full satisfaction to all persons. Thomas Sharplisse, a Taylor of London, had the chiefe prize, viz; foure thousand crownes in fayre plate, which was sent to his house in very stately manner, during the whole tyme of drawing of this Lottery, there was alwaies present diver worshipfull Knights and Esquires accompanied with sundry grave discreet cittizens" (h)

The lottery of 1615 was not completed as soon as desired. Therefore, a reassuring note was given to the public: "Yet have we not failed in that christian care of the colony in Virginia, to whom wee have lately made two sundry supplies of men and provisions."

No wonder then that lotteries flourished in this country. In the war emergency of 1754-55 the general assembly took this means of raising money to defray expenses "as the most easy and effectual method." (x) In 1756 occurred the lottery in which William Byrd, lll, sold the towns of Rock Ridge and Shockoe in

(h) Brown: The Genesis of the United States, Vol. 11, p. 558  
"Extracts from the Grocers' Record"

(x) Hening: Statutes at Large, Vol. VI, p. 453

an effort to retrieve the fortune which he had squandered in gaming. By 1769 the assembly saw just cause for passing the first law to control "pernicious games which corrupt morals and impoverish families." <sup>(x)</sup> After May 1, 1770 "no person or persons whatever, shall, on his own account, or that of another, either publicly or privately set up or have dealings with a lottery." (x)

After this period follow a series of acts permitting lotteries for various "worthy" causes -- academies, bridges, churches, masonic lodges, grammar schools -- which were highly successful, testifying to the continued popularity of this form of taking chances. This practice called forth Jefferson's "Thoughts on Lotteries", in which he warmly defends a practice "wherein the tax is laid on the willing only." "If we consider games of chance immoral then every pursuit of human industry is immoral: Navigators, merchants, hunters all depend upon chance. But the greatest of all gamblers is the farmer.. ....These, then, are games of chance. Yet so far from being immoral, they are indispensable to the existence of man..... But there are some which produce nothing, and endanger the well being of the individual engaged in them or of those depending on them. Such are games with cards, dice, billiards, etc..... There are other games of chance, useful on certain occasions, and injurious only when carried beyond their useful bounds. Such are insurance, lotteries, raffles, etc." (-†)

(x) Hening, Statutes at Large, Volume: VIII, p. 353  
 (-) Hirst, Life and Letters of Jefferson

Jefferson made a request to the legislature for permission to sell his property by lottery in order to provide enough money to pay his debts. The request was granted but his friends came to his aid in such a way that it was not necessary.

The passion for gambling characteristic of Virginia settlers was shown in the playing of nine pens, cards, dice, and kindred games at home and in public places. The betting which arose over these games, the races and the cock-pit went to excesses which involved entire estates. The outstanding example of this was the squandering of William Byrd, III. The spirit prevailing is shown by the story that William Randolph of "Tuckahoe" bet Peter Jefferson two hundred acres of land against a bowl of "Arrack Punch", lost his bet and deeded the land. The story of gambling may be told in the light of regulating acts.

The assembly of 1619 (x) legislated against "gaming with dice and cards". In 1729 (x) tables, tennis and bowls were added to this list and it was legislated that gambling debts, or any debt of which gambling was a part could not be recovered under the law. Betting at cock fights and horse races, those supreme joys of the planter, was prohibited in 1740. (x) Public playing of games, as well as betting thereon, was forbidden in 1745<sup>(x)</sup> except "billiards, backgammon and bowls."

- (x) Hening, Statutes at Large, Vol. 1, page 7
- (x) Vol. IV, p. 251
- (x) Vol. V p. 102
- (x) Vol. V p. 229

The ordinary keeper was held responsible for his house.

In amusing contrast to these decrees of the legislator is an incident told by "A Frenchman in Virginia", when in 1686 he visited his friend, Milor Parker, at the house of Mr. Wormley where the Governor's Council was meeting. He notes, "after supper they sat down to cards.....I found them next morning still at play and saw that Milor Parker had gained a hundred pieces of eight." (\*)

Again we smile at the notice that "Spotswood offered to bet the House of Burgesses £ 1000 that their charges against him would be decided unjust by any impartial person." (h) :

Governor Fauquier was the originator of a rage for gaiety and especially gambling in every form. This craze literally took possession of the colony in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Gambling existed in every walk of life.

A notice from military encampment shows the presence of gambling there. "Camp Union, Sept. 23, 1774.....Gaming is forbid in camp after this day and the officers are to take notice that this order is complied with." (2)

Finally, a statute of the College of William & Mary in 1792 rules against such practices as "Quelling, gaming, quarrelling, profane swearing and cursing, immorality of every kind, and all breaches of good order and decorum whether practiced within or without the walls of the university shall be particularly animadverted on, and punished by reproof,

(\*) Virginia Gazette in  
 (h) William & Mary C. Q. Vol. XXI, page 253  
 (\*) Durand, A Frenchman in Virginia  
 (2) Virginia Historical Magazine, Vol. XI, p. 245 - Orderly Book & Journal of James Newell

public censure or expulsion, as to the society shall appear to be proper." (3)

Cock-fighting is mentioned in every listing of the amusements of the Colonial Virginian. Its earliest use in England was by school boys. When it became a fashionable sport for men pits were built and "much money was laid on their heads." (w) Henry VIII had a cockpit added to Whitehall Palace and James I frequently amused himself by watching this sport.

Apparently, the practice in this country was patterned after the "Welch main" (w). This was in effect an elimination tournament. The entrants fought until one-half were killed. The survivors were pitted again, and the process repeated until only one was left alive.

"1746-7, Feb. 25. Main of cock between the gent of Gloster and of Jas. R. 20 pr matched and fought for 5 gs a battle and 50 gs the odd. Gloster won 13; afterw'd another match between the cocks of the aforesaid gent for 3 pistoles the battle and 30 pistoles the odd, in which James R. won 2 out of 3; besides several byes which Major Littlepage said would have been the case the first day if Bacon's Thunderbolts had been fallen in the match." (3)

(3) William & Mary College Quarterly, XX, p. 53

Statutes of the College of William & Mary 1792

(w) Strutt: The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England

(3) William & Mary C. Q. XX, p. 16

Personal Items - John Randolph of Roanoke

~~(1) Virginia Gazette~~

County and vicinity matches were popular. Gloucester had battles with at least three neighboring counties - York, New Kent, and James City. Business was commonly transacted on the occasion of such meets. Jerbone (3) wrote his employees in England that he could furnish desired information after the grand cockfight at New Castle. Balls the night following increased the popularity of the gathering.

The victorious bird won for its master a tidy sum. Prizes as high as ten pistoles (Note) the battle and one hundred the main were not unusual. Betting ran on a similar scale until prohibited by law. The scarcity of money in the colony caused inconveniences. George Hume in a letter 1754 gives an amusing account of such a handicap. "Money is so scarce it is a rare thing to see a dollar and at public places where great monied men must on cock fights, horse races, etc. ye noise is not now as it used to be - one pistol to 2 or 3 pistoles to one - it is now the common cry 2 cows and calves to one or three to one or sometimes 4 hogshead tob'r to one." (t)

In 1740 laws were passed forbidding betting on cock fights. Students at William & Mary were prohibited from keeping game cocks. Gradually, the sport became universally frowned upon.

(3) William & Mary College Quarterly, XI, p. 153

Note; One pistole amounted to about \$3.60.

(t) Virginia Historical Magazine Vol. XXII page 381 - Letters of George Hume of Virginia

Horse-racing has been placed last in this summary because it may be said to be the height of pleasure to the colonial gentleman. Virginians were true sons of England in their love of and pride in horses. One writer on horses says this dates back to the "Horse-thane" of Alfred the Great. (u) The support of the sport by the Stuart Monarchs and by Queen Anne is known. (w) A horse which was a "King's Plater" -- winner of annual races for which royal plate was given -- was highly prized in the choosing of pedigreed horses.

The development in this country was determined by the supply of horses. Until 1611 no permanent stock existed, those brought over in 1610 having been eaten in the winter of 1611. In 1626 there were estimated to be too few for manufacturing purposes and barely enough for military. Statistics in 1649 listed not more than two hundred. Michel's Journal in 1701-2 tells of considerable increase by that time. "They are very common. It must be a poor man who cannot afford one" (f)

The beginning of racing came about quite naturally in the pride and testing out of favorite horses. It was a natural step to the wager, a fixed time and place. That the practice was existing in 1704 and regular tracks for racing - two in Northumberland County - we learn from a suit at that time. Joseph Humphreys sued Thomas Pinkard for failure to meet his horse according to agreement on Scotland race ground October - 1703. The agreement having been made previously at the Fairfield

(u) William Youatt - The Horse

(w) Strutt: The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England

(f) Journal of Francis Louis Michel, 1701-2 V.H.M. Vol. XXIV

aces. (1)

The earliest date given for keeping horses exclusively for racing purposes was in 1730. (2) The importation of thoroughbreds is in another place set at 1737-40. "Another institution which affected the people of Virginia in quite a different way "(from settlements in West) "took formal shape about the time these journals begin. Though racing with saddle horses had been a favorite amusement from the earliest days of the colony, it was not until about 1737-40, that the importation of the progenitors of the modern thoroughbred began, and that horses were kept solely for racing" (3) A number of favorites were imported, among them "Jolly Rogers" and "Fear-naught". The Virginia race horse became justly famous for its performance. The early races on small horses, "cocktails", were quarter mile races, but with the improvement and use of blooded horses the length of race became one, three, and four miles. The "best of three four mile races" was standard length at Gloucester, Leedstown, and Fredericksburg.

The purse for the race was generally raised by subscription and varied from £ 35 and £ 50 to £ 100 or 67 pistoles, etc.

Each moderate sized locality came to have its race track on which races were common twice a year, often in connection with fairs. In addition, there were interstate matches between

(1) Virginia Historical Magazine, Vol. X, p. 320 - Historical and Genealogical Notes

(2) Virginia Historical Magazine, (H. G. Stanard) Vol. II, p. 293-305

(3) Virginia Historical Magazine, Vol. IV, p. 2; Journal of the Council of Virginia in Executive Session 1737-63 - date of note C. 1740

Virginia and Maryland and between Virginia and North Carolina. These occasions became the great social events of the year. Fine clothing was donned at that time and elaborate balls usually accompanied the races.

Disapproval of the races was shown at times but it was not the rule. "Mr. Waddel advised Mr. Mitchell from going to the races at Mr. Chins, and discouraged Col. Selden from going. O, what reason we have to be thankful that we have a minister who will watch over his flock that they may not go astray." (g)

Much more universal, however, is the spirit of a statement by Mrs. W. G. Stanard; "Our colonists liked cards and dancing, could not see that damnation was incurred by the celebration of Christmas or lurked in a mince pie, and entertained a strong partiality for foxhunting and above all racing." (j)

Human nature has <sup>not</sup> changed since these days of prolonged visits, banquets, races, and cock-fights. We pity the horses which ran the "best two out of three" four mile races and shrink from the practices of the cock-pit but this was the custom of the age. They felt no more harm in these than the mirror of another age will turn on the present.

(g) Journal of Co. James Gordon - entry Sept. 8, 1762

(j) Virginia Historical Magazine, Vol. II, p. 293-305  
M. G. Stanard, "Horse Racing in Virginia"