

## GAMBLING—WHAT'S THE HARM?

Sometime ago a pamphlet was issued by the Christchurch Council of the Christian Churches. By kind permission we reprint it in part.

Sport is a good thing for men and nations. Those who are responsible for this pamphlet claim to be sportsmen. They are concerned with the fact that Gambling kills sport. If anyone doubts that statement, let him approach the Rugby Union with a suggestion for sweepstakes on next season's competitions. The reception of his suggestion by that body will clear his mind. Or let him recall the football scandals in England, and the base-ball scandals in the States, which were wholly created by the introduction of gambling into those popular forms of sport. Sportsmen are afraid of gambling.

### THE VOICE OF THE WORLD.

To begin with a very general fact. The experience of all nations is contained in their laws. With one consent the laws of the nations put gambling under some form either of restraint or of repression. The reason lies in the fact that it contains in itself something dangerous to national life. The Courts have refused to regard gambling contracts seriously. They have refused to enforce them. It is worth recording that in spite of the poverty following the Napoleonic wars, the rising of public funds by lottery, which had been common, was banned. Success in obtaining large subscriptions was held to be no compensation for the economic and moral loss involved. British legislators have consistently declined to make revenue out of the gambling habit.

If anyone doubts the attitude of the New Zealand law on the subject, basing his doubt on the existence under restricted license of the Totalisator, there is a simple test he can apply. Let him start a two-up school in the Park, or a casino in Colombo Street, or let him raffle a motor car, and he will speedily find himself in the criminal's dock.

Every gambling transaction is placed under suspicion by the attitude of the Governments of the world.

### CLEARING THE COURSE.

That there is harm in gambling is generally admitted, but there is a tendency to call art unions, lotteries, and tote investments by some milder

name. It is contended that in these cases the act is morally indifferent so long as a man can afford the small sums he risks. That contention cannot be sustained. It differentiates between the rich and poor, and that is a differentiation which no democrat can countenance. Multitudes cannot afford to risk anything on gambling. If they gamble they rob themselves and their dependents of necessities. If gambling is wrong for the majority of the people, how can it be right for the leisured and the rich?

It cannot be allowed for one moment that the wrongness of gambling consists in inability to afford losses. If it did, winners could never be wrong, however much time and strength they wasted. The wrong is not to be found in "nicely calculated less or more," but in the act itself.

It is objected that in business, money is risked on uncertain events. It is, of course, true that there are risks attaching to all things future, and these risks have to be encountered in business. But no business man deliberately creates risks. It is his whole concern to reduce risk to a minimum—and through insurance, which is based on a law of average, he can often completely cover his risks. It is one of the great aims of science to eliminate risk, and to enthrone knowledge. But in a gamble risks are artificially created, and to reduce them is to cheat. The crux of the matter is the harm of transferring money from one pocket to another on the basis of absolute chance.

### THE HEART OF IT.

There are only two ways in which property may be legitimately transferred from one man to another. The one is by barter, the other by gift. We leave gifts out of consideration. In barter or sale an equivalent is given. Both buyer and seller receive benefit, and life for both is enriched. The attempt to get property without giving value for it, is at the root of all the economic wrongs from which the world is suffering to-day. If men gave value for all (outside the gift) that they got the millennium would be here. The unearned is the curse of society. But gambling gains are never earned. No equivalent is given. Men find themselves rich or poor for reasons that are unreasonable. Their riches are undeserved, and so, too, is their poverty.

The heart of the gambling problem then is found in the fact that it is unearned money that is at issue. Nothing is given for something. This, as was remarked above, is the heart of the whole economic problem. It is small wonder then that such a Labour leader as Mr Arthur Henderson should declare that: "Gambling is a greater foe to Labour than all the forces of Capitalism." Gladstone said, bluntly: "It is damnable. What can be the fun of getting other people's money without earning it?" John Ruskin, the leader of a great school in economics, puts it thus: "By far the greater part of the suffering and crime which exist at present in modern Europe, arises simply from people not understanding this truism—not knowing that produce or wealth is eternally connected by the laws of heaven and earth with resolute labour. They somehow hope to cheat or abrogate this everlasting law of life, and to feed where they have not furrowed, and be warm where they have not woven."

### DEAD SEA FRUIT.

If gambling is a barefaced defiance of a central law of life, the effects of it may be expected to be deadly. We proceed to detail them:—

1. The effects on the man. The gambling habit takes its toll of a man's character. It affects his efficiency. The lure of the unearned creates in many a feverish excitement through which they lose grip. A decline in interest is a decline in real efficiency, and that is an inevitable consequence of the formation of a gambling habit.

The victims of the mania are rendered impatient of the slow but wholesome methods of industry and thrift. A man who finds himself possessed of a week's wages through a lucky guess about horses, is sure to find his estimate of values disturbed, and the honest way of earning is depreciated in his eyes. He is in danger of becoming a mere Micawber, spinelessly waiting for something to turn up.

Charles Kingsley, for all his passionate love of horses, said: "I turned from the racecourse because it tempted me to bet, and betting tempted me into the company of passions unworthy not merely of a scholar and a gentleman, but of an honest and rational bargeman and collier." Judge Pring, of the Com-