

THROUGH A MONOCLE

PECULIARITIES OF GAMBLING.

I NOTICE that the community is in one of its periodical spasms of virtue over the gambling evil. There is, perhaps, no other problem confronting the complicated civilisation of to-day which so unmistakably exposes the tendency of most "humans" to "condone the sins they are inclined to," while "damning those they have no mind to." Gambling is to most of us a most silly and pernicious habit as practised by other people, but a proof of clear foresight and an encouragement to progress of some sort as practised by ourselves. Thus the man who "follows the races" and bets on horse-flesh, will tell you quite gravely that he is encouraging the better breeding of horses, and that his winnings are not due to luck at all but to his superior ability to pick out a winning "mount." But when he takes up the paper and reads that a lot of Chinamen, who play "fan-tan" because they do not understand horse-racing and would not feel at home in the betting ring anyway, have been raided by the police and put behind the bars, he commends the vigilant virtue of the community and marvels that human beings with a spark of intelligence can be so idiotic.

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THEN he turns to another page of the paper and discovers that there are people so purblind as to condemn his sort of gambling. They actually want a law passed to make it illegal. The things they say about it are quite as vigorous as the things he thinks about the "fan-tan" fools. Possibly he gets to wondering who these critics of the "sport of kings" may be; and there have been times when he could discover in their ranks men who got rich by "dabbling in real estate" or who habitually deal on the stock market. They think that betting on a horse race is an amazingly wicked act, but that betting on the probability that a piece of real estate will increase in value, is a method of encouraging the "breed" of real estate. They would be quite shocked to be classed with the "book-maker" or the "chink" who plays "fan-tan"; and yet when they buy real estate for a thousand dollars and sell it for ten thousand, without having done a stroke of work which really increases its value, what are they pocketing except the winnings of a lucky bet?

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IF you ask me, I can tell which I think is the most anti-social transaction—winning money on a horse race or winning money on a real estate "deal." The man who wins on a horse race may get his money from a "book-maker" or from another horse-race bettor like himself. Usually it comes out of a pocket which is accustomed to such goings and comings and does not suffer from them. Occasionally a boy is plundered; and this may lead to till-tapping or betrayal of trust. But society at large suffers little positive hurt, except by way

—possibly—of bad example. On the other hand, the man who buys real estate and keeps people off it till they crowd all about it and force up the price, hinders the growth and development of the community, presses poverty back into its slums, and "breeds"—not better horse-flesh, but disease, stunted human beings, crime and ignorance. He is an oppressor as well as a gambler; and it is a sight for the gods to see him or his hirelings sitting in condemnation on the Chinaman's "fan-tan" or the "gay boy's" unliterary dealings with "book-makers."

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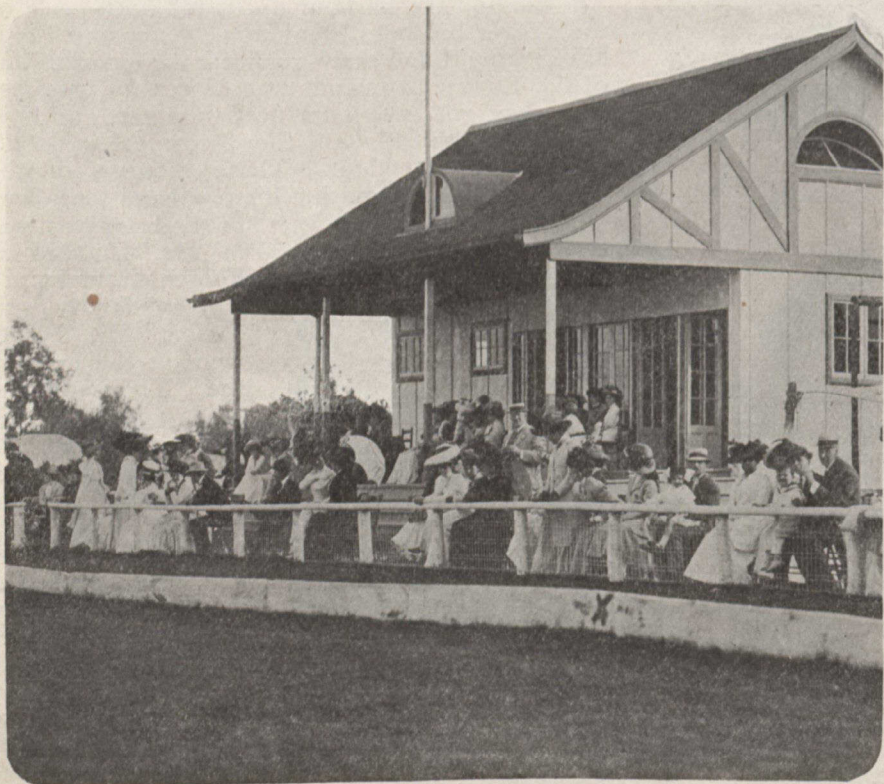
AS for the stock exchange, when the uniformed representatives of our Christian civilisation march by the stock exchange to raid a "fan-tan" joint, how "He that sitteth in the heavens" must "laugh." If the amounts won and lost by betting on the stock exchange were piled up beside the amounts which are won and lost by all sorts of illegal gambling, they would look like a Mont Blanc surveying an ant-hill. And as for moral difference, the advantage is all with the "fan-tan" player. I am told that "fan-tan" is usually a pretty fairly played game. Roulette as played at Monte Carlo is perfectly honest. By that, I mean that there is no "loading of dice" or "stacking of cards." It is a game of chance, pure and simple; and everything is frankly left to chance. But what of the stock exchange? Is chance given free play there; or is there manipulation of the cards, "loading of the dice," or deliberate planning to "fleece the lambs"? Why, a Bret Harte mining camp gambler would be ashamed to play against the rankest of "tenderfeet" in the way that the exploiters of a stock will "play" for the "wool" of the "lambs."

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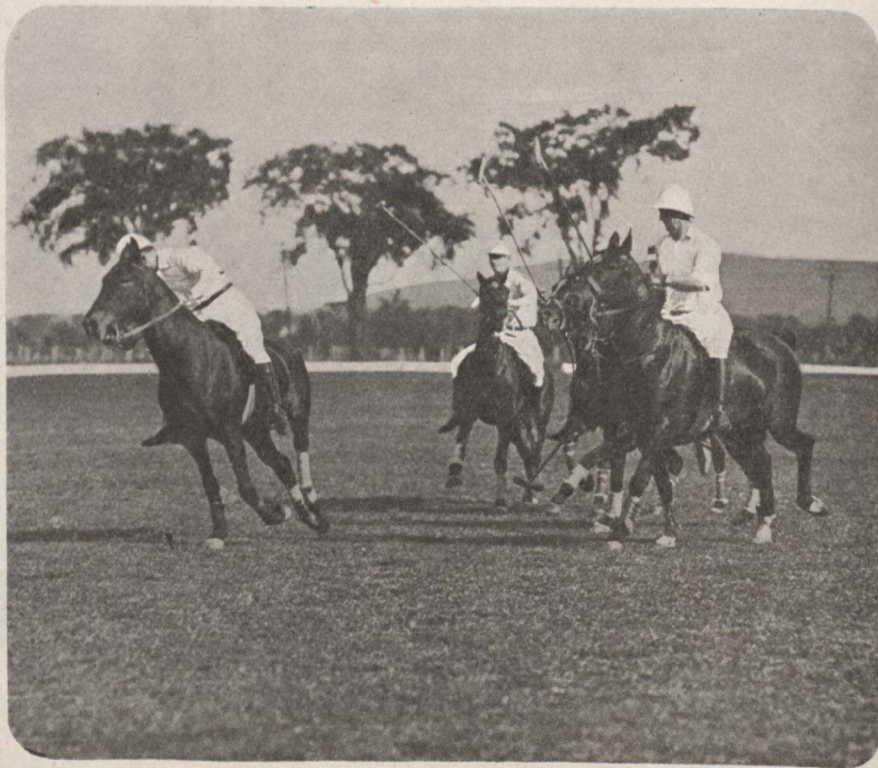
OF course, we *profess* to make the bucket shop illegal. If the type-setter desires to put that "profess" in italics, I will have no quarrel with him. But so far as the true inwardness of a large percentage of the transactions in both places are concerned, what is the difference between a bucket shop and a stock broker's office? I am asking for information—not answering my own question. But I have heard people who have dealt with both declare that the difference consisted in the percentage of "margin" they will accept. That is, the bucket shop is the poor man's stock exchange. And so down with it! "Fan-tan" is the poor Chinaman's recreation of the gambling variety. And so down with it! The lottery is the poor man's way of taking chances. It is simple. He understands it; while he does not know whether "Soo" is a railway or a legal process. Stock speculation is far beyond his reach; but he can buy a ticket in a lottery for a pittance, and dream golden dreams for weeks while awaiting the "drawing." But down with it! What business has the poor man with golden dreams or taking chances? He should save all his money carefully for us to rake in when we put up the rent or form a combine or lift the tariff. It is really our money that he is so careless with when he gambles. Down with it! Worse still, he may take some more of our money if he happens to be where he can reach it—especially if he loses. And, of course, when we gamble, we never take anybody's money but our own.

THE MONOCLE MAN.

POLO IS IN SEASON AT MONTREAL AND TORONTO



Last week society watched Polo Matches at Montreal. This is the Back River Lawn and Pavilion.



Montreal, Toronto and Buffalo Teams competed. This week they have been in Toronto.

Photographs by A. A. Gleason, Montreal.