

either press-men or academicians, this exquisite thing enjoys a very prominent position on the line.

I had occasion to visit Mr. Benson's studio in Boston the other day. His confrère, Mr. Edmund C. Tarbell, received us. "In Summer" they had idiotically criticised when exhibited before being sent to New York; all the delicious simplicity they imagined the artist had obtained with little labour or care.

"Of course Benson felt rather cut up about it, for, you see, through the whole summer, as long as he could possibly paint out of doors, he worked on the picture." Verily Mr. Benson shall have his reward, in spite of a Bostonian verdict. You don't come across such an artistic conscience every day. "Yes, the people here are horribly opposed to the new school; but the press knows as much about painting—well, as much as it knows about anything else. Here is a sea piece Benson will send to an exhibition in Chicago. I'm sorry I haven't more of his to show you. There are some family portraits he has almost finished, but he wouldn't like them shown. Yes, portrait painting for money is beastly enough; we like the money, but hate the work. I have a portrait in the New York exhibition, a girl with a little three-cornered mouth. Benson will be sorry to have missed you, but he's gone to Providence to teach a school"—with a grimace—"you know we must make use of many ways and means." Mr. Tarbell, as you see, was quite inclined to be most obliging. I remembered afterwards, of course, that I had marked his excellent portrait with a double asterisk in the catalogue. Salutary as opposition may be, there is danger, you know, when the wealthy profane feel free to express their arbitrary opinion on every created thing, that the cravings of our soul yield to those of our stomach, and from artists we become artificers, when our work shall be rather the depicting of a parvenu's progeny than the painting of subjects a whole community might covet.

It is so uncommon to like what we like, thinks a French writer. The wild laughter and applause that resounded throughout the last night of *Erminie's* two years' run at the Casino were artistically unpromising enough, yet surely less so than the forced "bravo" in Italian opera and symphony concert.

"First nights" with New Yorkers excite none of the enthusiasm and expectation they do with people who look upon the theatre as something above a place of mere amusement. Strong was the German and Italian element at the initial performance of Verdi's *Otello*; pleasantly strong when you were not in the very midst of the poor devils who had paid their dollar and a half to perch among the "gods." All those nervous little exclamations, those ill-suppressed bravissimos, your phlegmatic nature used to rail at in continental towns you now hail with satisfaction after the soulless comments of unresponsive, self-constituted American critics.

Some one said *Otello* "out-Wagnered Wagner." Not at all. Though Verdi has kept abreast of modern ideas, *Otello* has grown and ripened under Italian sunshine. If there are no melodies in it at which a so-called music-loving public can spring, still are science and romance very closely allied throughout the opera. Life human, present, is what our art depicts to-day, and painters in sound as well as in colour would show us work not so much satisfying in itself, as containing a faithful picture of live sunlight, of real rain. *Otello* the opera, with its clever orchestration, is a painting which must be to us good in proportion to the degree of faithfulness it exhibits in depicting *Othello* the play. Verdi seems the illustrator of Shakespeare. To say with any authority how far he has succeeded, one must have heard the work many times.

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### WHAT IS GAMBLING?

SOME three or four months ago the *Witness*, of Montreal, drew attention to the existence in that city of certain establishments, known in popular slang as *bucket-shops*, which profess to trade in stocks of various kinds, but which, as a matter of fact, scarcely make even a pretence of transferring from seller to buyer the stocks which are professedly sold and bought. The *Witness* contended that such transactions do not constitute trading either in the real or in the legal sense of the term, but are strictly of the nature of gambling. Day after day the indefatigable reporter of the newspaper kept furnishing his readers with fresh descriptions of the alleged gambling, coloured by a few tragic pictures of the financial and moral ruin to which it had led. Public interest certainly, if not also public indignation, was aroused; and the proprietors of the bucket-shops assuredly did not allay these feelings by entering a suit against the *Witness* for damages of a somewhat startling amount. As the authorities were called upon to stop the business of these establishments, but as no steps were taken in that direction, it may be inferred that there was at least some doubt as to the applicability of existing laws to the case. This is confirmed by the fact of the Hon. Mr. Abbott having brought a Bill into the Senate, which is intended to put the business of bucket-shops under the legal stigma of gambling. From the obvious current of public opinion it may be presumed that Mr. Abbott's Bill will become law, and many social reformers will be apt to rest satisfied with such a deliberate public condemnation of gambling, even when it is cloaked under the forms of trade.

But it is always well to remember that legislation, even when wise, is at best merely a political reform, and does not necessarily imply any moral improvement of society. On the contrary, if a law does not—and a law rarely can—represent the very highest moral conceptions, it may often check, rather than stimulate, the free and full expansion of the moral life by leading men to confine their moral aspirations within the bare letter of legal requirements. This in fact is one of the most constant impediments in the way of moral elevation; and therefore all great moral and religious reformers have been obliged to adopt the line of teaching, familiarized by

the memorable example of the Sermon on the Mount, which insists that the fulfilment of law requires its observance, not in its letter alone, but in its spirit and its truth. It may therefore be worth while considering what is the real height and front of the offence involved in gambling, in order that we may appreciate those demands of the spirit of justice, to which gambling is essentially opposed.

The term *gambling* is originally another form of *gaming*, and expressed therefore at first the idea of *play*—a word which, it is scarcely necessary to add, is also often used for gambling operations. This origin of the idea is indicated in other languages also, as in the French *jeu*, and the German *spiel*, with their derivations. Now, all sorts of play—all games and sports—are distinguished from the earnest work of life by the fact, that the exertions they involve aim at no end beyond themselves, the player being satisfied with the simple pleasure of the exertion. The man of healthy body and mind does not seek any additional inducement to sport; and games retain their innocent and wholesome function in human life, so long as they are kept free from extraneous excitements. But the same morbid craving, which turns away from the simple joys of nature and prefers the unhealthy excitement of artificial stimulants, whether material or spiritual, seems to have infected at an early period the natural passion for play; and, as a result of this, under all grades of civilization the device seems to be familiar of trying to enhance the pleasure of genuine sport by adulterating it with the wholly distinct desire of gain, which has no proper place except in connection with the serious business of life.

The evils, flowing from this unhappy misalliance, have been manifold, but have mostly tended in two directions: they have corrupted either the pure enjoyments of sport or the pure pursuits of business. Both of these evils have called forth the earnest efforts of philanthropic minds, though it is naturally the latter that has mainly excited the denunciations of moralists, and led to the prohibitory measures of legislators. Never, perhaps, in the history of the world has this evil assumed such appalling forms and proportions as in our own day. Driven from modes and places of acknowledged gambling, the spirit of the gambler has sought shelter under the forms of legitimate trade, and appears to be so successful in this *ruse*, that legal ingenuity may possibly be baffled in its endeavour to disentangle the confusion thus created. At least it will be wise not to trust too firmly in the political expedient of prohibitory legislation. As long as the gambling spirit exists, the cunning, with which it has been commonly allied, will endeavour to outwit, and will probably often succeed in outwitting, the most ingenious devices of jurisprudence; and there can be no complete security against the inventions of this cunning till the reason and conscience of the community have been thoroughly impressed, not merely with the iniquity of bucket-shops, but with the essential meanness of the spirit which leads to gambling in any form.

And therefore we can come back upon the question, What is it that constitutes the essence of the gambler's vice? Though many turn with some contempt from the practical mind which looks at social problems mainly from the standpoint of economy, yet here, as in many other cases, it is the economical view of a question that furnishes the key to its moral and political bearings. Now, what is gambling, in its economical aspect? It implies essentially a payment for no value received. It has of course other evil features which assume more or less prominence in peculiar circumstances. On these it is unnecessary here to dwell. Underlying them all, and forming a permanent distinction of gambling amid all its variations, is the fact that the gambler is seeking to obtain a portion of the wealth of the world, which he has done nothing to produce, and for which he gives no equivalent. In every transaction of legitimate trade it is understood that the parties interested shall give each other a genuine *quid pro quo*: in gambling it is assumed that one party shall win, and the other shall lose, a *quid pro nihilo*. It is this that constitutes the essential injustice and meanness of gambling; and it is because this inherent meanness can be cunningly concealed, that gambling forms such a subtle poison in the social life of a people.

For it is only when the intrinsic nature of the operation is glozed over by some ingenious fiction, that men of honourable feeling allow themselves to be drawn into it. All trade is exchange, and every just transaction in trade is an exchange of equivalents, so that the parties are understood to be left, as far as values are concerned, in the same relation to each other as that in which they stood before the exchange took place. This assumption of justice can explain some curious facts in the industrial history of the world. From any other point of view it would be impossible to understand the singular unanimity with which all the great thinkers, Pagan and Christian alike, of the ancient as well as of the mediæval world, condemned the taking of interest or "usury," as it was commonly termed, on money lent. To them it seemed that the usurer was simply taking from the borrower more than he had actually lent him, and was therefore exacting a payment for which he had given no equivalent. The modern mind is also surprised at the moral objections which ancient thinkers very generally expressed against trading, especially in retail. But the objections arose from the same source. The ancient thinkers, overlooking the value of the merchant's labour as an addition to the value of his commodities, regarded him as simply exacting from his customers more than he himself had paid—something, therefore, for which he had given no equivalent. And so to the clearer industrial thought of the modern world it is also a self-evident principle of commercial justice, that neither party in a commercial transaction shall overreach the other so as to obtain from him more than a fair equivalent for what he receives. How far this principle would reach into the economical relations of men, it is impossible at present to sketch even in vague outline. Any one, who reflects on the distribution of the wealth which is produced from year to year, must see that the toiling masses receive but a very meagre equivalent for the labour which they have