

you lay down your first stake, even if it is only "in fun," you are actually gambling. Remember that there is always a first inch at the top of every precipice. Stop before you begin!

I do not make the absurd affirmation that every one who under any circumstances plays a game at cards is a gambler, any more than ever every one who drinks a glass of wine is a toper. But it is equally true that he who never touches an intoxicant, cannot possibly become a drunkard, and he who never plays a game of hazard, cannot possibly become a gambler. My own personal practice at boarding-school and college was one of entire abstinence from cards as well as from wine-cups. I have never witnessed a play in a theatre, or seen a horse-race, nor do I consider that I have lost anything by keeping all such coals of fire out of my garments. All games of chance have a dangerous fascination. Arch deacon Farrar has truly said "There is a gambling element in human nature." It must be guarded against just as carefully as any sensual appetite. With the excitement of a game of hazard comes the strong temptation to risk a stake on the game; as soon as the first stake is laid down, conscience goes with it, and the Devil wins the game. So strong is the fascination of this sorcery, that in the public "Conversazione-halle" of Baden-Baden, I have seen well-dressed ladies watch the roulette-table until they became so bewitched with the play that they would furtively toss a gold Napoleon over on the table from behind the crowd. The "gambling element" in them had taken fire. No small amount of betting is indulged in by ladies at the Saratoga races. Just here lies the peril with you, my friend. The excitement of games of hazard sets you in a flame; then comes a small stake; then a larger. If you win, you play to win more, and if you lose, you play on to make up your losses. Before you know it, the hot coals you took into your bosom have set you on fire, and burned your conscience to a crisp.

But it is not only from card-tables and faro-banks that mischief is to be apprehended. Many are tempted to take "a small risk" in mining-stocks or other volatile stocks that are playing up and down in the market. I have known a half dozen mere lads to "pool" their earnings or their pocket-money in a venture or a share or two of stock. This rage for dabbling

in stocks turns hundreds of respectable people—not only boys, but gray-haired men—into actual gamblers, although they would be shocked if the ugly name were applied to them. They are not shocked at the thing itself. Of course, there is as legitimate business transacted in the purchase and sale of stocks, bonds, and public securities, as there is in the purchase and sale of bread-tuffs or real estate. Yet there are reckless gambling operations in all of them. The stock-gambler is a man who buys what he does not pay for, and sells what he does not deliver. The person who ought to be attending to his own business, and yet ventures certain sums in stock speculations, runs a fearful risk of financial ruin. The sad obituary of more than one recent defaulter and purloiner of trust-funds might be written in a simple line "committed moral suicide in Wall street."

The dangers to young men are increasing from several causes. 1st. There is a growing passion for getting rich suddenly and easily. The lure of allgaming, whether it be with dice or with cards, in lotteries or in pool-rooms, on the race-course or in the stock-market, the specious lure is to get something for nothing. "Why should I toil hard to earn a dollar when I can possibly win an hundred by the turn of a card, or the speed of a horse, or a sharp operation in stocks?" So reasons covetousness, and thrusts his hand into hot coals to snatch the dollars. 2d. The gambling element is insinuating itself more and more into the trade of our land; the immense sudden gains or losses by "corners," "pools," etc., are alarming evidences of this fact. Old-fashioned slow and sure methods of business are sneered at; he is accounted the smartest man who by a shrewd "operation," wins in a month what solid sensible men used to earn in a life-time. 3rd. The rapid increase of a luxurious and self-indulgent style of living, fans this flame of reckless venture. Living by luck is a distrust of Providence and a tampering with the devil. A life ordered by God's laws, is never a game of chance.

This whole topic is one for pulpits to discuss and for Christians to think about. Not merely is raffling at church-fairs an outrage against civil law that ought to be scourged out of the sanctuary, but God's people should beware how they tamper with all and every seductive device for