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THE CRITIC'S CORNER.

Mr. Chamberlain and the Empire.

Recently Mr. Chamberlain's friends have sung his praises very fervently to the effect that he is the great empire-builder, and from some of his own utterances one might judge that in his more exalted moments he actually looked upon himself, as the creator of the Empire or at least as one who is destined to give it a new form. In so far as there is a real British Empire of course many men and many movements have during the centuries contributed to the making of it. I do not for one moment mean to suggest that Mr. Chamberlain was born too late in the day to take a hand in this great operation. But I am firmly convinced that it is possible for the present day workers to exaggerate their relative importance and to be too self-conscious in regard to their Empire building. Mr. Balfour is not likely to err in that direction, he has had too much to do with philosophy for that mistake to be easy for him. He does his work faithfully from day to day feeling that it is not altogether a joyful business but that duty must be done. The Secretary for the colonies is a different type of man, he is intensely practical, he builds up a business, a screw business, he builds up Birmingham municipality, and then he proceeds to build up the Empire. This has involved a renunciation of his old radicalism, a plunge into an extravagant war, the casting over of the Nonconformist allies and the repudiation of all his own ideas as to National education. Along this line he had already taxed the working man's sugar and now he is prepared to tax the working man's loaf. Mr. Chamberlain once said of the great John Bright that he began his political life with a complete programme to which he had never added anything and had lived to see it carried out. There was much truth in that but with equal truth it might be said that Mr. Chamberlain began his political life with a certain political programme and he has lived to reverse its policy and denounce all its distinctive ideas. He may have been wise or unwise, that is too big a subject to be discussed here and now. It is evident to all that Mr. Chamberlain is a remarkable man, a man of great ability, high courage and fierce determination. He takes one thing at a time, sees clearly what he wants and is determined if possible to get it. In a world where there is so much weakness and uncertainty that kind of man counts, after a while the crowd looks upon him as the only statesman and he comes to see the reflection of himself as the creator of the Empire. Certainly if Mr. Chamberlain can carry his present proposals, he will influence the life of the Empire very much in the way of making or marring it. Of that I shall have something to say in another article.

It may be weakness or prejudice but I do not like the idea of an Empire made in Birmingham. I am afraid it will not be the genuine thing, it will be electroplated and not real gold. Birmingham by favour of the Conservatives seems to have almost become a pocket borough of Mr. Chamberlain but the end of the world is not yet. Mr. Chamberlain's Empire building is likely to cause considerable friction very soon and it can be looked at in many ways. There are many intelligent Canadians who see that England does not exist simply to provide a market for Canadian produce, she has other work, and serves other purposes and one question is how does Mr. Chamberlain's Empire look in the light of the higher ideas.

VERAX.

THE MANIA FOR GAMBLING.

People often wonder why the painful experience of A is usually of so little value to B. Instead of being useful to B, the latter, particularly if he is young, is apt to draw on his reserves of self confidence and egotism, by assuming that things would have been managed differently by him, and therefore that things would have turned out differently. Probably it is in the nature of things that each man should painfully buy his own experience. It is moral discipline, and by whom is that needed? Only by the sharp scythe of experience can the luxuriant weeds of human conceit be kept down. All this is not a common place. Maxims relating to conduct and life are very apt, as we have suggested, to sound to inexperienced like the purposeless tinnabulation of a jangling chime. But, like passages in the Bible, they take on, later, a deepened meaning in view of the happenings of life.

Year after year homilies have been preached about the risks and wrongs of speculation; year after year people by the hundreds burn their fingers in speculation; year after year new crops of foolish people grow up to take their places and go through the same experiences. In the recent extensive financial failure at Toronto it is said hundreds of persons have lost heavily through their attempts at speculation in stocks. What is speculation? It is an attempt to get rich fast. It is an effort to get money without giving value in return. It is another form of betting. It is gambling. When a person, particularly any person of limited means, puts up a certain amount of money on a given stock, for speculative purposes, it is practically like making a bet with himself or with another as to whether the stock will go up higher, in which case he will make something, or whether it will go lower, in which case he may lose every penny he has risked.

The morality of gambling cannot be defended because there is no morality in it to defend. But in the case of simply persons of moderate means, speculation is not only immoral and fundamentally dishonest, but on general principles the very acme of folly. A man who allows the microbe of gambling to get into his mind will be very apt to lose relish for making a living and laying up for the future by the old fashioned wholesome ways of carefulness and economy, and self-denial. He has taken a fever and a

restlessness into his system which will need something stronger than quinine to eradicate. No wonder large employers and institutions, knowing the unsettling influence of speculative gambling prohibit it as far as possible among their employees.

Apart from the moral aspect of the question, nothing can be more foolish than for any Canadian to speculate on any stock which is of international character; that is, any stock which is handled and dealt with in both the United States and Canada; for this reason that the dog which in this case is the United States, is always sure to wag the tail, which in this case is Canada. It is often within the power of the large capitalists and stock operators of the United States to raise or depress the value of stocks at will, at all events temporarily, and that perhaps without selling a single share. For example, if there is a certain stock they wish to depress, they might only need to offer a large block of it. The public seeing these strong shrewd men selling, take alarm, and try to get rid of the stock. In the panic the stock goes down, when the big operator seeing his chance now buys it at a low figure. Meantime the small operator, unable to hold on, has to let go, and comes out shorn of his money. He who sups with the devil needs a long spoon, says the old proverb, and the Canadian who is tempted to speculate in stocks, particularly of an international character, has ten chances to one of losing in the end.

It is the duty of the church, and if all who lead, by voice, pen, or example, to discourage the gambling spirit. Boys should be taught not to bet. Congregations should consider church raffles an undignified abomination. Christian women should have nothing to do with the fashionable mania for adding spice to whist and other card playing by money hazards. Young men should be exhorted to hold aloof from stock speculations, and what applies to the young applies equally to "children of a larger growth."

Literary Notes.

The opening article in the June Cosmopolitan is very timely in subject—The Rose of Yesterday and Today. Other articles are: Gateways, Artistic and Characteristic; Floral Head-Dresses; the Sugar-Beet in the United States; and an English Garden City. The four short stories are exceptionally interesting, and Merriman's serial is brought to a close. Irvington, New York.

In the June number of the Missionary Review of the World, Miss Brain deals with "Music in Missionary Meetings" in a most suggestive way. This series of articles on Missionary Meetings is most helpful. Another series of exceptional interest is that on "A Missionary's Experiences in the Heart of Africa," by Dr. De Witt C. Snyder. They are bright and informing and give a vivid picture of things as they are in the Kongo State. Other articles that should not be passed over are those on "Work Among the Lepers in Surinam," on "South Africa," and on "Cannibal Christendom." The General Intelligence Department is a veritable Missionary Newspaper. Published monthly by Funk & Wagnalls Company, 30 Lafayette place, New York.