

## Gambling in Real Estate.

BY REV. THOMAS C. HALL.

There is great difficulty in so defining gambling that legitimate business foresight, with its honourable profits, will not be included. In general, gambling is separated from the legitimate speculation of business by the desire to get something without making adequate return in work and foresight to the community. The man who buys wheat when it is quite plentiful, transports it, insures it, stores it up securely, and then sells it as the community has need of it, may be mistaken in his estimate of the coming need, but he is entitled to a fair profit for his skilled labour in having the wheat ready for use when it is needed. That gambling and illegitimate speculation grow out of this, perhaps even form a main portion of the transactions in wheat, is undoubted. This is so far forth a genuine misfortune. But the evils of gambling at horse-races, in lotteries, on stock exchanges, demoralizing as undoubtedly they are, seem mere trifles compared to the enormous demoralization that springs directly from gambling in real estate, so called. This is a matter, not of theory, but of actual sad experience. The writer of this began work in the city of Omaha just as it started on a speculative career that was not carefully worked up, as at Kansas City or Wichita, but began in the sympathy with the gambling crazes there prevalent. Almost everybody in Omaha, from the soberest bank president to the poorest day-laborer, was involved in the rise of prices that commenced the mania. Ministers, women, and even children at school dabbled in "town lots," situated in many instances far out toward the rising sun.

The first marked evil was the withdrawal from productive work of the most ambitious, shrewd, and active young life of the place. The turning over of lots was exciting and profitable. Every second office was a "Real Estate Exchange." The second great evil was the sympathetic demoralization of the legitimate business houses. These also had to make money fast to keep up with the merchant princes in speculative property. Sensational methods and unsound finance went along with this haste to get rich. The third evil was the enormous increase in rents, driving useful labour to other places, and compelling those who were not sharing in the gambling to pay simply exorbitant rates for the poorest kind of house or office. The fourth marked evil was the rush to Omaha of the lazy, incompetent, and discredited elements of smaller places. These came feeling that in the excitement they might not be unlucky, and could not lose, even if they were they had nothing, not even character, to lose. The fifth woe was the false estimate engendered about success. The only shrewd man was the man who bought to day for \$1,000 and sold a few hours after for \$4,000.

Then came the end. The "bottom dropped out." Prices went down: untold suffering resulted. The poor who had bought lots at fabulous rates, on part payments and had built houses on them, lost all in the shrinkage; and, after evictions and tears, no one gained, for the houses are even now falling to pieces without tenants. Ministers left pulpits to go into the real estate business, and now, stranded and discredited, hawked books or picked up a precarious existence that reflected no credit on their calling. Others found themselves so loaded with debt that all further religious influence there was impossible.

The banks in Omaha, unlike those in Kansas City, kept their heads fairly well; but many connected with them found their fortunes reduced to a tithe of what they were rated at. Business stopped. The town now lies like a poor trembling debauchee, paralyzed and suffering after the mad excitement of the "boom." It is the hardest field for religious work known to religious teachers. Moody, Mills, and many others have prayed and toiled, and wrought, and went away wondering what the matter was. The Episcopal Church is about the only one that can show any results at all commensurate with the money and labour expended on the city.

The place is bound to be one of the chief of the inland centers. Her location, climate, population, and railway facilities are unrivaled west of Chicago; and yet a true friend can hardly wish to see her prosper again, if her prosperity is to be attended with the awful spiritual and moral losses she has suffered from her last rush toward success. What has gone on in Omaha, Kansas City, St. Paul, Duluth, Wichita, and other places in such a marked manner is going on in all our great towns in smaller degree. It would be a blessing second to none to the rising generation if in some way gambling in unimproved real estate could be absolutely stopped. The man who makes money in unimproved real estate has got something for nothing. His success is poison to the whole community, and there are hundreds who lose their all in vain efforts to imitate him. And the money thus lost is gone. It is labour flung into the effort to hold unproductive land out of the reach of those who want homes and farms and factory sites, until the pressure of population compels them to pay the speculative holder a fancy price. The real estate speculator thus is simply betting on the time when those necessities will compel purchase. The gamblers on the stock exchange hurt the community only very little, the gamblers at the faro-table hurt only themselves and their families; the gamblers in real estate inflict a simply intolerable wrong upon the community at large, and, save in a few instances, without any corresponding financial return to themselves. Compared to this evil, the lottery and the stock exchange are only gnats at which we strain, while swallowing the camel with hardly a grimace.—*Outlook.*

### Sabbaths are the Mountains of Life.

One other point of practical teaching suggested by mountain environment is the value of the Sabbath for the whole of life "between the Sabbaths." A week without a religious keeping of the Lord's day is life at a dead level. Sabbath rest and worship lift all the other days into a purer air and enrich them with heavenly influences. On this mount of privilege the pattern of the true life is shown to the uplooking soul, according to which the daily work is to be done, and the character shaped for a better life. How much of the loftiest and richest experience possible to men do those lose whose Christian theory may be that every week day is a Sabbath while

the unchristian fact is

*Each Sabbath is a week day in their practice.*

We need the uplift of one divine day in seven, which shall take the soul above the sordid, distracting cares of the work-a-day world, and give it a view like that from the Delectable Mountains of Bunyan. The gifts of the Sabbath to the week are more and richer than all that is given up to secure the blessings of the day of rest.

### Quiet Moments.

Welcome with joy each week, the day that God has called His day. To each day of the week God has given its special mission, its share of pleasure and of pain, necessary to purify and fortify, and prepare us for eternity. But *Sunday* is a day of love.

Love searches out the avenues which lead most directly to the heart of Jesus; and since the disciple found these avenues in the words his Master spoke, not to the multitudes who represented all classes of religious thought and feeling, and which must in consequence be more general, but to the few who were his nearest friends, that might be the reason why he treasured up so many of these words in his memory. Many an illiterate Christian has known more of the Saviour's love than the learned philosopher or theologian, because, instead of perplexing himself with intricate questions of criticism, or with any of the more abstruse doctrines of theology, he is content to let his mind lovingly and humbly rest on those simple utterances which so manifestly came from the Saviour's heart, and which still breathe so warmly His compassion for the weak and ignorant.