

Bells Across the Snow.

FRANCIS RIDLEY HAVERGAL.

O Christmas, merry Christmas,
Is with us once again,
With memories and greetings,
With joy and with its pain.
A minor in the carol,
A shadow in the light,
A spray of cypress twining
With holly wreath to-night.
And the hush is never broken
By the laughter light and low,
As we listen in the starlight
To the bells across the snow!

O Christmas, merry Christmas,
'Tis not so very long
Since other voices blended
With the carol and the song!
Could we but hear them singing
As they are singing now,
Could we but see the radiance
Of the crown on each dear brow,
There were no sigh to smother,
No hidden tear to flow,
As we listen in the starlight
To the bells across the snow!

O Christmas, merry Christmas,
This never more can be;
We cannot bring again the days
Of our unshadowed glee.
But Christmas, happy Christmas,
Sweet herald of good will,
With holy songs of glory
Brings holy gladness still;
For peace and hope may brighten,
And patient love may glow,
As we listen in the starlight
To the bells across the snow!

The Ethics of Gambling.

BY S. C. MITCHELL.

Gambling may be roughly defined as the attempt to get something for nothing. The gambling habit originates in a threefold desire, seeking the stimulus of excitement, delighting in victory over another, and loving money as the equivalent of power. If these desires are not regarded as noble, they are at least natural. It was probably from this viewpoint that Sir Henry Maine remarked: "Gambling is instinctive in the human breast." These three impulses, moreover, are not mutually exclusive; but on the contrary are co-operative and interactive.

While the gambling instinct in its origin and operation remains the same, the forms of gambling are constantly changing. The ancient Egyptians bet on chess; the classical peoples bet on dice; after the fourteenth century, when playing-cards were introduced into Europe—probably brought from Arabia to Viterbo in 1379—that game soon out-distanced all others in popularity. But the inventive genius of our day has multiplied the forms of gambling. The same class of men who formerly wagered thousands on the turn of a card, or on the emptying of a dice box, now speculate in the stock, produce, or cotton exchanges, or wager on athletic sports and on horse-racing, which is at present the greatest of all gambling games. The editor of "The Spirit of the Times"—a well-known sporting paper—says that the United States is the garden-spot of gambling. "We gamble more universally, more persistently, and for higher stakes, than the people of any other country." Gambling is the American sin. It has merged into social amusement, on the one hand, and into business, on the other; and hence it is regarded by some as innocent and by others as necessary.

I. Stimulus of Excitement.

In the beginning, most persons take part in games of chance solely for amusement, a motive in itself not only simple, but innocent. It is a form of social interest, akin to the child's delight in play, which is the result of the natural impulses seeking outward expression. If this desire for amusement tended to go no further than the attainment of its avowed object, its ethical import need not engage our attention. But too often the simple desire for amusement with cards issues in purposes and passions which by a gradual process head up in the habit of gambling. The first step is innocent, but the second step which it suggests, and to which it frequently impels is the beginning of sorrow.

The significance of the first step may be thus traced. Participation in a game of chance leads ordinarily to two things: first, skill in playing the game, and, secondly, a desire to protract the interest; and, of necessity, to increase the excitement. Both of these factors—skill and the stimulus of excitement—become ends themselves. A man's skill, aside from any money consideration, is often a strong inducement to gamble. Of this I shall speak later.

To give zest to the game, involving skill and chance, a small stake is proposed. Here enters the motive which is in the social game wholly subsidiary, but which becomes dominant in the gambler's passion. The game, originating in a desire for amusement, is no longer an end, but a means. Money is no longer a means to give zest, but an end in itself. The initial actors have changed parts. A pastime as a result of acquired skill has be-

come a profession; the instinct seeking the stimulus of excitement has begotten a habit of intoxication as unbreakable as that of opium or whiskey; and the endeavor to increase the interest by a small stake has become a sordid determination to get money without rendering its equivalent. The gambling habit in its fascination and power has been described for us in an unforgettable way by Dickens in the person of Little Nell's grandfather, with every faculty paralyzed, with every emotion dead, except the passion for gambling.

We do not, however, have to resort to fiction to find types of the habitual intoxication which gambling breeds. The tenacity of its grip upon a man's character, its octopus-like enfolding power, is known by living instances to every one of us. Gamblers as a class are exceedingly difficult to reform. Their whole moral and spiritual nature has undergone a stiffening process, the rigidity and callousness of which have well nigh passed the possibility of a return to the normal condition of the mind—humane, sympathetic, supple, and self-energizing. The effect of liquor is in a measure physical; the effect of opium is seen in the errancy of the moral sense; voluptuousness so lessens the vitality of the higher faculties that they atrophy; but the effect of gambling is not so much to stunt as to kill the human in man, converting him into a mechanism, steel-like in the sharpness as well as in the coldness of his operations, and, although soulless, yet impelled by a passion resistless toward ends that are no less fascinating than cruel. Hardness best describes the resultant character of the gambler, in which the human had given place to the tiger element. For gambling is the only habit which finds its gratification, not merely in the association with another, but at the expense, and even the ruin of one's fellowman. It preys on another's misfortune, as the vulture on carrion. Thus it is seen that the stimulus of excitement in gambling leads to a character which is the negative of the crystal principle of ethics—Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

II. The delight in victory over another.

In the complexity of motives that lead to gambling is the delight in victory. Man is masterful. The first word which he caught from his creator was "Have dominion," and whatever else he has forgotten of his genesis those words re-echo constantly in his mind. The original desire for amusement in a game of cards results in skill in overcoming another and a money stake which changes hands as an evidence of victory. Though distinct in origin, these motive forces not only act in concert, but also excite one another. Skill in the game, correctness of judgment in a horse-race, insight as to the turn of the market quotations, become professional aims filled with professional pride. Our definition was not exhaustive. Gambling is often something more than an attempt to get something for nothing. Glory as well as gold is an ultimate motive in the gambler's breast. He delights in the sheer discomfort of his opponent. "There is an authentic instance," says Curtis, "of a speculator, who was carrying on margin 11,000,000 bushels of grain, which declined in value \$25,000 during the afternoon, and who did not bother himself even to read the quotations, but gave his entire attention for four hours to a game of whist at dollar points, and was much out of temper at its close because of a loss of nine dollars." (Forum, Oct., 1891.)

The exceeding sinfulness of this aspect of the gambler's mind is that it leads him to treat persons as things. This confusion is fatal to all the finer feelings in man. When once a person becomes to you a mere pawn, when the head means less than the hand, when man becomes a machine, then materialism has wrought its worst. Such a state of mind not only resents the suggestion that you are your brother's keeper, but also denies that you are your brother's brother. It is one thing to confound truth and error, it is another to mistake the living for the dead. Thus the gambler's heartless delight in victory over another is the negative of the law of love as stated and embodied by our Saviour.

It is perhaps instances of nerve like that just cited which led one to say that "gambling is reprehensible, but the spirit that underlies it is noble. A genuine gambler is a great man gone wrong, and gambling is a misdirection of courage and energy and enterprise—of all those attributes which make man most manly." But we are bound to add that there is nothing so bad as a good thing perverted. As to the boasted gambler's honor, two things, however, are to be noted. First, gambling debts are not collectible by law, and hence the honor principle must obtain, if this profession is to be kept up. A gambler's honor as to debt, accordingly, is not so much an evidence of uprightness, as an unwillingness to be excluded from the gambling fraternity. And, secondly, it must be remembered that, when gambling debts were collectible in the courts, many were the suits entered, showing that this so-called honor is either a recent growth or springs from the fear of losing caste in gambling circles.

III. Desire for Money as the Equivalent of Power.

The third equivalent to gamble was stated to be the desire for power, and hence the love of money as its equivalent. This is a cause that is peculiarly active at

this time, as is evidenced by the forms of gambling now most in vogue. Games have given place to speculation. The barred room over a saloon has been abandoned for the readier revenues of the Stock Exchange. Men are now less influenced by the love of excitement or delight in victory over an opponent, and more by the gain of money. Gambling has been stripped of outward adornment. It is single-eyed and bent on money. Social excitement and pride born of skill are factors of little moment in the devotee of the "bucket-shop," in whose joyless eyes and fixed expression can be read the mania for money. Gambling has become 'strict business' without sentiment, and without concealment; and the passion is today as wide-spread as it is intense.

The evils that flow from the attempt to get something for nothing by gambling are twofold. Gambling is a social affair, both because it takes two to engage in it, and because it concerns property, in which society has an inalienable right.

Regarded in a certain way, the evil of opium is individual, because its effect may eat in the main with the man who indulges in it. He can eat opium alone. Not so with gambling; at least two are necessary to make a game. For every winner there must be a loser.

Moreover, the social nature of property is violated by gambling. No man can rightfully ask, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?" "No man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself" is a principle that is no less true of one's property than it is of his person. Property is not inert; it has sympathies which reach out, like tentacles, to clasp all the varied interests of human well-being. Property is the product of men's co-operation, and in its safeguarding society has an interest. That is the meaning of the deed recorded in the court. Law concerns itself with property. Money, which is an evidence of property, is industrial rather than individual. Property roots itself by infinite ramifications in the social soil and cannot thence be plucked without regard to these vital connections. The deepening appreciation of this truth, the responsibility of wealth, is one of the most gratifying facts in American life at the present time. Its evidences are upon every hand. Witness the magnificent gifts of our public-spirited men of means to the educational and philanthropic enterprises of our country.

This communal interest in property is set aside by gambling, and an exclusively selfish interest is substituted therefor. A striking instance of this is known to me personally. A young man, moving in fashionable circles, was engaged to an attractive young lady, before whom all seemed bright. The young man's health became precarious and his doctor ordered him to go abroad for the sake of the baths. Unwilling to part from his affianced, he begged that she would marry him, although he was and about to go beyond the ocean. She consented; and on the day of the marriage he set out for an indefinite stay in a foreign land, leaving her in the home of her father. After some months, the waters proved effective; his health was restored; and the young husband came back to his bride. They at once set up a home, furnishing it joyfully and beautifully. He seemed interested in business and prosperous. All was happiness. Late one night he returned home, and, finding his wife waiting for him, nonchalantly asked, "How much money do you suppose, wife, we put into the furniture of our home?" And then proposed playfully that they make a list then and there of the cost of all the articles in the home. The wife suspected nothing. Next morning, however, the officer appeared to levy upon the furniture with that same list in his hand. At the gambling table on the previous night when the game ran high, the young man had put up his all, even the furniture of his home. Disappointment, divorce, life-sorrow, these fell in rapid succession upon the wife whose heart until that fatal moment, knew only love and joy. The sang-froid of that incident is appalling. Only the grip of the gambling habit could have so far deadened the human in man.

Gambling affects the social element in property in another important way. It paralyzes the productive power of the man who gambles. It reverses in him the basal incentives to thrift, inventiveness, industrial co-operation, and to self-help. The gambler knows not the glow which is begotten by a manly desire to subdue nature, to add to the forces that make for man's well-being. He is a stranger to honest work. He resents the suggestion of toil. He is not merely a parasite. To him work is a reproach.

This aspect of the gambler's art has led some extremists to say that gambling is stealing. That statement fails to note that the exchange of money at the gambling table is voluntary. But when the gambler becomes the gamester, then the line between gambling and stealing is less easily drawn.

Thus gambling is seen to be not only at war with the divine principle underlying the relations of persons, as it is epitomized in the Golden Rule, but also at war with the facts of property, both as regards its increase and as regards society's interest in it.

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