

'Whether we may not lend smaller sums to those that are of any trade, that they may procure tools and materials to work with?'

Such are the simple questions which Wesley propounded to his opponents. Later on in his work he began to institute social agencies of the very same nature as 'General' Booth has started with a flourish of trumpets, whereby we learn once again that there is nothing new under the sun, and that the 'Salvationists' are not the first social reformers. If the Wesleyans had followed up the work which John Wesley, as a clergyman of the Church of England, be it remembered, had begun, and had not withdrawn themselves from the Church, and split into so many sects, there would not have been so much work for the Church Army and the Salvation Army to do now. Let us see what John Wesley actually did.

He started a workshop for the unemployed, as we see from his diary of November 3rd and 25th, 1740, which speaks (1) of the distribution of clothes among 'the numerous poor of the Society,' and (2) goes on to say: 'After several methods proposed for employing those who were out of business, we determined to make a trial of one which several of our brethren recommended to us. Our aim was, with as little expense as possible, to keep them at once from want and from idleness; in order to do which we took twelve of the poorest and a teacher into the Society room, where they were employed for four months, till the spring came on, in carding and spinning of cotton. And the design answered; they were employed and maintained with very little more than the produce of their own labor.'

In the next year, 1741, we find, under the date May 7th, an account of how Wesley reminded the United Society of the poverty and distress then existing, and asked them to give what clothes they could spare and a penny a week to their relief. 'My design, I told them, is to employ for the present all the women who are out of business, and desire it, in knitting, and to give them wages for what they do.'

Then, again, Wesley started the first medical dispensary for the poor in London, to which about thirty came the first day, 'and in three weeks about three hundred. This we continued for several years, till, the number of patients still increasing, the expense was greater than we could bear.' He started also the first 'poor man's bank,' on the lines which 'General' Booth has since adopted. Thus, under Sunday, January 17th, 1748, we read in the diary: 'I made a public collection towards a lending stock for the poor. Our rule is, to lend only twenty shillings at once, which is repaid weekly within three months. I began this about a year and a half ago; 30l 16s. were then collected, and out of this no less than 255 persons have been relieved in eighteen months.' Then, finally, as at the beginning of his work at Oxford, Wesley always attached much importance to visiting prisoners in gaol, to the 'prison mission;' so often went to the Newgate and Marshalsea prisons in London to comfort and save their unhappy inmates.

Thus we see how he started the germs of institutions which, unfortunately, lapsed, and are now being revived, as perfectly original, after a period of more than a century. He spoke, too, with no uncertain voice upon the evils of wealth not rightly used; indeed, so strong were his views upon the evils of money that he condemned all accumulation of riches among members of the Society. 'The design, procuring more of this world's goods,' he said, in one of his last sermons, 'than will supply the plain necessities of life (not delicacies, not superfluities), the laboring after a larger measure of worldly substance, is expressly and absolutely forbidden.' And he was really troubled in spirit when he saw that the promotion of godly, frugal, and sober, and prudent habits among Wesleyans was naturally helping them to acquire wealth. 'I fear,' he said,

'wherever riches have increased, the essence of religion has decreased in the same proportion.' So, in despair, he advised all true Methodists to part with all their substance: 'Hoard nothing, lay up no treasure in earth, but give all you can, that is, all you have. I defy all the men upon earth, yea, all the angels in heaven, to find any other way of extracting the poison from riches. I give you this advice before sinking into the dust. I am pained for you that are rich in this world.' These are words of despair, for Wesley must have already seen the spirit of worldliness creeping into his flock. And his despair was not altogether unjustifiable. A hundred years after his death the Methodist world was asked to commemorate his centenary by a thankoffering amounting to an average of 2½l. per head was expected to realize 250,000l. But the utmost that has actually been raised is only 11,500l. (certainly this seems as if Wesley's forebodings as to wealth causing indifference were only too true. But, surely, Christianity teaches us that if we have wealth we can use it in a Christian way, and that the possession of great riches brings also great responsibilities. Riches to a true Christian are not so much a matter for despair as for hope—hope that now he can do something for his poorer brethren.

We have thus endeavoured to summarize the main points of Wesley's thought and action upon social questions, upon the practical alleviation of poverty, and upon the use to be made of riches. They are interesting as showing a side of his work which his followers have rather neglected, but which anticipated in some points the work of social reform in which the Church and outside bodies are so earnestly engaged.—G. in Church Bells.

GAMBLING IN OUR SPORTS.

In Lecky's *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* we read that 'Chief Justice Kenyon in 1796 delivered a charge in which he dwelt on the scandalous gambling at faro which was carried on at the houses of some ladies in high society. He threatened to send them to the pillory if they were convicted before him. In the following year Lady Buckingham and two other ladies of position were in fact condemned, not indeed to the pillory, but to pay 50l. each for illegal gambling. It was proved that they had gaming parties by rotation in each others' houses, and sat gambling till three or four in the morning.' We are afraid that when the historian of the nineteenth century comes to record the doings of the society of the day, he will have to write down something very like the last two sentences of this extract, without, however, recording that any lady of high social position was punished for gambling. Nor, indeed, do we think it altogether wise that attempts should be made by the law to put down in society a practice which can never become extinct till something like a moral change comes over the community. If attempts are made they should be made with great vigour and should be fully successful, otherwise they bring the law into unnecessary discredit. Those that have been made so far have not really touched the evil at its source, and we believe that the extinction of the evil is the work not so much of the law as of the Church.

And we are all of us, as Churchmen, glad and proud to see that the Church, both in congress and in conferences, has lifted up no uncertain voice upon the matter. It has denounced gambling as wrong, yet not so much wrong in itself as in the harm and ruin which it inevitably causes to so many of its votaries. It is wrong in the same way as intemperance is wrong, because it is an abuse of what in itself might be almost harmless. And yet, after all, dare we say that even the most innocent forms

of gambling are harmless—even the mildest form of it, indulged in merely for an evening's amusement and for infinitesimal stakes—when we see the tremendous evils to which it leads? We are not now referring—however tempting such a reference might be—to a certain notorious case which has occurred in the highest circle of society, and which will shortly be the subject of legal proceedings. We are referring to the widespread nature of gambling generally, and to the multitudinous forms which it has taken upon itself in the modern world. It does not exist, as some papers of a prejudiced mind are so fond of asserting, only in the richer and more fashionable circles of society; though we all know that it exists there to an unfortunate extent. It exists in every class of society, and in none, perhaps, more, proportionately, than in some of the middle and lower classes. For we think it is not sufficiently recognized how deeply the whole mass of British sport is penetrated and permeated with the most offensive form of the gambling spirit. We need not, of course, quote the case of horse racing as an example, for that is perfectly well known, and the betting ring is a legalised and a national institution, though one of which we have no reason to be proud. But since we were speaking about the subject of horse racing we may as well remark that one of our great midland centres of population, Nottingham, has found the evils of horse-racing, though indulged in in the town for only four days in the year, sufficiently serious to cause its Council to take the decisive step of abolishing the races altogether. This has actually been done within the last few months, in spite of a certain pecuniary loss which the abolition entailed.

However, as we said, the question of horse-racing may be left out of consideration for the present. It does not appeal so invidiously to all classes of the community as do football and cricket. These two really noble games have been the glory of our British youth for ages, and are most distinctively our national pastimes. Till recently they were not infected with the gambling spirit to any appreciable extent. But to-day, in proportion as their pursuit has been widely developed, they have become the excuse for betting and gambling of the most insidious description. If you go to any large manufacturing town in the north of England on a Saturday afternoon—especially to any town in the factory districts of Lancashire and Yorkshire—you will see games of football in the winter and of cricket in the summer eagerly watched, not by hundreds but by thousands of spectators, chiefly, of course, men, youths, and boys. The attendance is far larger than is usually seen in the southern counties of England, and any clergyman living in a large northern town can corroborate our statement as to the huge numbers which these weekly football or cricket matches attract.

Nearly every man, youth, and boy on the ground has 'something on the match.' We know that many people who only look at the outside are not aware of this, and think that because there is no authorized betting-ring there is therefore no betting. The writer, on remarking upon the prevalence of betting at these matches to a curate, who was exceedingly fond of both games and an ardent admirer of good play, was told by him that he (the curate) had been to many great matches, and had only once or twice noticed any open betting. It is quite possible to do so if one goes only in certain parts of the ground, but it is utterly impossible to ignore it in other parts. And it is a well known fact to the initiated that bets on even ordinary matches (not only great contests) can be placed or booked, or whatever the term may be, at many apparently innocent shops which are supposed to supply only what are known as 'cricket and football requisites.' The worst of it is that these bets are often very small—mere boys can put their twopences and