

SACRED HEART SCHOOL, N.E. VALLEY.

THE following further Subscriptions towards the Building Fund have been received:—Mrs Vanini, £3 3s; Chuie Kum, £2; Jas. Caldwell (Gridiron Hotel), Mrs N. Woods, Wm. Brittondon, Thos. Murphy (Pine Hill), Jas. Watson, Thos. McCormack, and D. Fogarty, £1 each; Mrs Mackie collected 17s; Mrs Dowdell and Ed Devine, 5s each.

DEATH

HART.—At his residence, Tuapeka West, on August 17, James, the beloved husband of Mary Hart, in his 76th year; deeply regretted.—R.I.P.

IN MEMORIAM

MORRISSEY.—In memory of Thomas Morrissey, who departed this life at Kakanui, August 26, 1903. Inserted by his father and brothers.



To promote the cause of Religion and Justice by the ways of Truth and Peace.

LEO XIII. to the N.Z. TABLET

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1904.

'GAMBLING'



It was a wise old logician who said that, in dealing with certain disputed points, the first essential is right definition of terms; the second, right definition; the third, right definition. The long-drawn international dispute over the 'Alabama' turned, for instance, on the meaning of the word, 'equip' in the phrase 'to equip a ship of war.' A further instance, of the need of definition of terms is furnished by a clergyman who went from Oamaru last week to enlighten the population of Christchurch in the subject of 'Gambling.' But the light thrown upon the subject was, we must confess, far less illuminating than that of a scent and smoking slush-lamp. The reverend illuminator's address seems to have been chiefly an attack on the fine new Catholic Cathedral, which (he declared) 'was being partly built with the proceeds of gambling.' But the worthy soul quite omitted 'the first essential' in dealing with the question—he did not define the term 'gambling.' We will supply his, perhaps, not altogether unintentional omission. The sixth volume of the great standard 'Encyclopaedic Dictionary' (p 699) defines 'gamble' 'to play a game for a stake.' Now, the term 'to play for a stake' is obviously a very protean one. It covers actions that are, morally, about as different in intent and effect as a friendly dig in the fifth rib and the angry stroke of a bowie-knife in the same quarter. It may mean anything from a boys' game of chance for an 'alley,' or adults' turn at 'nap' for brass pins, up to the staking of tens of thousands of pounds on one's 'fancy' in horse-flesh and the 'Jubilee Plunger's' mad risks on the 'trembling chances' of 'rouge et noir.' A gulf separates the injury done to God's honor, to the individual, to the family, and to society by the different actions that are loosely termed 'gambling.'

This brings us to the second offence against logic and good sense perpetrated by the reverend gentleman from Oamaru who raised such a dense and pungent smoke around the subject of gambling in Christchurch. The

offence referred to is the fallacy of undue assumption. He let off a kite without string or tail: in other words, he indulged in a vast deal of high-flying invective, without having taken the trouble to state the precise moral principles with which it was connected. But question-begging is easier and cheaper any day than getting to the fundamental reasons of things. As reported, his discourse on 'gambling' assumed that there is no distinction, as to moral aspect, between any one kind of playing for a stake and any other kind of playing for a stake—that it is all, always, and essentially wicked; and that a home in the hell of the damned is alike for the curly-headed urchin who stakes a brass button against a 'glassey,' and for the heartless rake who flings away his estate on the chance of a horse-race and at one fell stroke reduces his wife and little family to misery. Throughout, the ill-mannered critic of the Bishop of Christchurch coolly assumes the whole question in dispute. We do not know on what principles he could sustain his attack; but if he has any, he is welcome to space in our columns for their exposition and defence. Catholics know their own principles and claim the right to be judged by them. And our position on this point may be summarily expressed in the following statements: Playing for a stake is not in itself unlawful—not intrinsically wrong. It may be done so long as it is conformable to the requirements of justice. And this condition is verified when (1) the object is good, or, at least, not bad ('indifferent,' as our theologians say); (2) when the person so playing is in a position to justly alienate the stake which he exposes; (3) when the game is freely entered into; (4) when the play is free from cheating; and (5) when there is equality of chance. For the present we content ourselves with remarking (a) that the conditions set forth above are fulfilled in bazaars and lotteries for Catholic purposes; (b) that these are only subsidiary to the great means of raising money by direct contributions—which, in the case of the new Christchurch Cathedral, have been generous to a degree; and (c) that the Bishop of Christchurch is at least as strongly opposed as is his Oamaru critic to the abuses of the game of chance, and that, too, on principles which have the merit of being grounded on sane common-sense, sound logic, and good theology. For the rest (d) we think the Bishop of Christchurch and his clergy and people are abundantly able to mind their own business without the impertinent interference of a clerical meddler from Oamaru.

We look through the report of that 'hot-and-strong' lecture on 'Gambling,' and alack! we find no reference therein to the two greatest forms of gambling of our day—to wit, stock exchange gambling and insurance gambling. Why this ominous omission? Why, moreover, are these particular kinds of gambling always 'skipped' by the anti-gambling clergy when denouncing the unpardonable sin? The reason is—if rumor speaketh true—that the good men have a decided weakness for this sort of 'playing for a stake,' and that they

'Compound for sins they are inclined to,
By damning those they have no mind to.'

If we were on wagering bent, we would stake Lombard Street against a China orange that Bishop Grimes' critic has a 'gamble' in a life or fire insurance policy, or in both. In the 'Life of Archbishop Magee' (Anglican) there appears a letter on this subject by the late Dr. Salmon, of Trinity College, Dublin, from which we take the following extract for the especial behoof of the North Otago cleric: 'One form of betting is recognised as a prudential duty. I mean life assurance. You bet with an assurance company that you will die; they bet that you will live—and you are well pleased to loose your bet. Betting is, you say, buying a chance; but suppose each would rather have the chance than the price to be paid for it, why not? Two boys want to see a show. Each has only half the price of admission.