

## NEW ZEALAND WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE UNION

(Incorporated)

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"For God, and Home, and Humanity"

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## GAMBLING

By the Rev. F. F. Parry

Address given at the May Meeting of  
Dunedin Central W.C.T.U.

My subject although not popular is certainly timely. Gambling has reached alarming proportions in New Zealand. The enormous amount of money passing constantly through the Totalisator (and it is but a fraction of the Nation's expenditure on this vice) affords a saddening commentary on the thriftlessness, extravagance and not infrequently, the sheer dishonesty which have invaded public life.

Not only the Turf, as such, but almost every other form of sport has fallen under the harmful influence and sway of this evil. New Zealand—not apt to be behind either in good or evil—is full of this vice in all forms. Gambling is rampant in the highest circles and in the lowest; among members of the State Government and among convicts in the prison yards. This form of vice pervades our cities, extends over every line of travel—rail, air and sea—and infests all the ways and walks of public and private life.

It is flaunted in our public streets and highways. It invades our factories, workrooms, offices, schools and homes. It is carried on in the store hard by the till; and even boys creep out of bed at night in unsuspected disobedience, to give it their attention.

The daily press fosters it through its columns; the National Broadcasting system publishes its results. Even Churches are found which condone and encourage it—albeit by subterfuge. For what are raffles and art unions but gambling pure and simple? The worthiness of the cause may be pleaded as an excuse, but the cause itself is demeaned and degraded by stooping to the gutter for its support.

If you ask why the rapid spread and growth of the evil in our midst—a sufficient answer would be found along the following lines:—

(a) The homely and sober pursuits and joys of an earlier age are not exciting and sensational enough for the fevered times in which we live.

(b) A spirit is abroad today which demands a ripping good time, regardless of the consequences. National morality is very clearly on the downgrade and is passing with increasing momentum to its doom.

(c) The gospel of "get-rich-quick" seems to be spreading everywhere.

(d) The Church's lips are paralysed and silent when they should be sounding the note of warning and alarm.

(e) At the bottom of all is that moral and spiritual anarchy which laughs at all things pure and sacred, sober and righteous, just and good.

Gambling is a subtle form of theft. To take property from another without an adequate return in goods or service is dishonest and dishonourable—with one exception, when and where property is transferred by deed of gift.

The husbandman renders produce for his gains; the mechanic, his skilled labour. The gambler renders no return and often resorts to downright cheating to obtain his gains.

Betting is gambling—and dealings in stocks and shares are not infrequently sheer gambling too. Profits so earned are often no better than the profits from dice and cards and chance. When skill returns for its earnings service, a useful commodity as knowledge, valuable goods, wholesome amusement or profitable labour it is honest commerce. A pilot threading his way

through a narrow channel; a lawyer threading through a still more intricate one in legal argument, both give service for the price received: but all the gains of mere skill which result in no real benefit are dishonest gains.

Gambling is the negation of everything just and honest in man's transactions with his fellows. The highway robber avows his deeds—does them openly. The gambler sneaks to the same result under skulking pretence. There is a frank way and a mean way of doing evil. The gambler takes the meanest way of doing dirty deeds. He belongs to a league of sharpers and cheats.

If I walk abroad and a hungry wretch bears off my purse with but a single note inside it, the community is stirred, the officers of the law are out to bring the culprit to his shame: but a worse thief may meet me, decoy me, and by far greater dishonesty filch my fortune, but no one stirs and soon the story is forgotten.

Gambling diseases the mind, unfitting it for the sober duties of daily life. Gamblers are seldom industrious men. A gambling mechanic finds his labour uninteresting as his passion for play increases. He grows unsteady and neglects his work and becomes unfaithful to his promises to customers and clients. Soon, little jobs seem little enough, his excited imagination demands big contracts, large returns and in pursuit of sudden profits, by wild schemes, he plunges into ruin himself, dragging others with him.

Gambling vitiates the imagination, corrupts the tastes, destroys industry; for why should he drudge for shillings when he can gamble for pounds, or practise economy and thrift when he can make or lose hundreds in a night.

It destroys domestic habits and affections. Home is a prison to an inveterate gambler. There is no air there that he can breathe. He may sport with his children, and smile upon his wife for a moment, but his heart, his strong passions are not there with them. A little branch stream may flow through the family, but the deep river of his interests and affections flows away from home.

On the issue of a game the ancient Germans would stake their property, their wives, their children and themselves. And by how much better is the man who will stake the money which is to give his family bread and