

BETTING AND GAMBLING

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Betting and gambling by Seton Churchill

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SETON CHURCHILL

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BY

MAJOR SETON CHURCHILL

AUTHOR OF "FORBIDDEN FRUIT FOR YOUNG MEN," "STEPPING-STONES TO
HIGHER THINGS," "CHURCH ORDINANCES FROM THE LAYMAN'S
STANDPOINT," "GENERAL GORDON: A CHRISTIAN
HERO," ETC. ETC.

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PREFACE.

THERE is a large number of pamphlets, tracts, and sermons published on the subject with which this book deals but, from their limited size, such are not able to deal very comprehensively with the many aspects of the question which present themselves. There are also a few scientific books dealing with the laws of chance, but the very limited sale that these have obtained, shows that there is still something wanting in the form of a book which aims at the same time at being both comprehensive and popular. If this one is the means of helping any to take the right side in contending against one of the greatest evils of this age, the object of the writer will have been attained.

CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE HISTORY AND NATURE OF GAMBLING	1
II. EVIL EFFECTS OF GAMBLING	22
III. GAMES AND GAMBLING	46
IV. SPREAD OF GAMBLING AMONG THE WORKING CLASSES	67
V. HORSE-RACING	86
VI. BOOKMAKERS AND TIPSTERS	111
VII. COMMERCE AND GAMBLING	124
VIII. MONTE CARLO	161
IX. REMEDIES	184

BETTING AND GAMBLING.

CHAPTER I.

THE HISTORY AND NATURE OF GAMBLING.

LIKE many other evils, gambling is of great antiquity ; indeed, there can be but little doubt that it dates back to pre-historic times. We know that the Roman soldiers cast lots at the foot of the cross for the garments of the Son of God ; and long before that time, we are told, Samson slew a company of Philistines in order to obtain the wherewithal to enable him to pay a bet that he had lost, through the treachery of his heathen wife. Whether that was the first time gambling had caused man's hands to be stained with man's blood, we are not informed, but it certainly was not the last time. Since then the blood of thousands has been witnessing against this cursed evil, which has brought so much misery into the world.

Three hundred years before Christ was born the gambler was classified by Aristotle with the thief ; and laws were enacted in pagan Greece and Rome

for the suppression of gambling. Euripides and Juvenal both tell us that in Greece, and Cicero tells us that in Rome, attempts were made by the State to restrict the evil by means of legislation.

The early Fathers of the Christian Church waged incessant war with this vice of gambling. Dr. Westcott, the Bishop of Durham, tells us that one of the earliest Christian writings was directed to the subject, and contained familiar words to this effect:—"If you say that you are a Christian when you are a dice player, you say you are what you are not, because you are a partner with the world."

Let us take a few more examples of the opinion of the early Fathers. St. Chrysostom says: "Not God, but the devil found out play;" St. Cyprian says: "A common gamester may call himself a Christian, but he is not one;" St. Clemens Alexandrinus says: "Idleness and wantonness provide these games for the lazy and useless people of the world." At the council of Eliberis it was decreed that "a Christian playing at dice or tables is not to be admitted to Holy Communion but after a year's penance and abstention, and his total amendment."

The Mahomedan world, at a very early stage, was evidently tainted with the same evil, and it was probably in existence throughout the whole of Arabia, for we find the Prophet Mahomet saying in the Koran, Sura V.: "O ye that believe! Verily wine, and the casting of lots, and images, and divining arrows, are an abomination from amongst