

# Ten Reasons against the Totalisator.

By the Rev. Joseph Nicholson.

The Victorian Racing Club has resolved to ask the Government to legalise the totalisator. As a student of this question for more than 35 years, I have strong convictions that legalising the totalisator creates and intensifies more evils than it cures. I do not deny that, from a Racing Club point of view, it is financially remunerative, and has other points of advantage to those who *will* gamble. The Racing Clubs of New Zealand and South Australia give glowing testimonies to its "magnificent success." This is not surprising, seeing New Zealand Clubs net nearly £270,000 a year. plus nomination fees and gate money. South Australian Clubs profit £36,858 annually by it. No doubt there are highly honourable gentlemen connected with the Victorian Racing Club, who are impartially superior to financial considerations, and who neither bet themselves nor desire to aid others in that direction, but who honestly hope to reduce existing evils by the totalisator.

It is admitted that gambling is a growing vice, but it is not true to say it is inherent and universal. To get wealth without labouring for it has attractions to many, but it is both mean and repulsive to others. The wise moralist does not entice youth to practise folly and vice by giving legal sanction and respectable company to it. We do not act so with other follies and vices. We deter rather than entice. In this matter we are not dependent upon mere opinion. The facts of experience, testified to by

scores of public men, justify the following objections:—

1. Legalising the totalisator changes legal reprobation of gambling into legal approbation, and gives State aid to gambling, which is a blunder.

2. Legalising the totalisator confers a lucrative monopoly on Racing Clubs, who cater for a sporting luxury that is expensive to the morals of the State, and for which they give no equivalent.

3. Racing Club totalisators create a new Political Party, with financial vested interests to serve and conserve, which are hard to dislodge.

4. Bookmakers are not abolished, but work side by side, as "tote agents"; are as numerous as ever in New Zealand and South Australia, and, with reduced incomes, are more dangerous than ever to youth as "walking totes" under legalised gambling. (The temporary suppression of "tote shops" in Adelaide was due to Sir John Downer's clause making betting "in a public place" a penal offence.)

5. New Zealand and South Australian legislators are profoundly dissatisfied with totalisator experiences, and freely discuss the wisdom of repealing measures. (The present inability to "repeal" is due to political influence based on financial interests held by Racing Clubs and the Government.)

6. The area of gambling is enlarged by making it safe and respectable by law. South Australian de-

scriptions of the machine are that it is a "nursery for young gamblers," and the "South Australian Register" styles it "this pleasant young man's guide to gambling."

7. Juvenile criminal convictions have increased in totalisator territory. Justice Edwards, Christchurch, attributes the increase of native-born criminals from 51 to 62 per cent. to "the growing gambling spirit, and to the temptations supplied by the totalisator." South Australian juvenile commitments increased from 624 to 1,035 in four years.

8. Twenty-one leading Adelaide merchant firms, knowing what a terrible snare it had been to their employees, signed a public protest, on 23rd August, 1902, against any extension of the use of the totalisator, on the ground that they were "in a position to judge of its harmful results in the city." Since then the amount passing through the machine has increased from £196,746 in 1902 to £491,443 in 1911.

9. Charity revenue as a plea for legalising gambling is vicious in principle and degrading in practice. "Doing evil that good may come" is always disappointing, for good does not come from evil. All Protestant Churches have condemned raffles at bazaars for that reason. If American experience is repeated in Australia, the Roman Catholic Church will do the same in less than ten years. Several charitable institutions in South Australia have declined the gambling bribe. I know of streams of charity that were diverted from institutions receiving revenue from gambling fractions. Others, in Victoria, would do so on the ground that the gambling "subsidy," with which the prospective Bill desires to "endow" the charities, would be sufficient. Benevolent instincts would be checked; charitable motives would

be mixed with greed of gain; and national character would deteriorate.

10. The evil precedent of legalised gambling would produce evil progeny. Tasmania is a shocking example of this. It began in 1893 by legalising the V.D.L. Bank lottery. The next year (1894) a Totalisator Bill was offered and adopted; it was hard to consistently refuse it. Two years later (1896) Tattersall's sweeps, denied a home in all the States, was welcomed to Tasmania. The Premier's plea was, "I do not see how logically Parliament can be asked to do that (i.e., suppress) in respect to Tattersall's sweeps which has by special Act of Parliament legalised another lottery—V.D.L. Bank lottery." Tasmania's cup of iniquity is not full yet, for that State, with the co-operation of the present Premier, is setting aside the State laws to evade or neutralise the Federal Postal Laws 1901 against transmitting lottery matters through the mails. It is spreading a cancerous sore all through the Australian Commonwealth, and a day of reckoning will come. The latest Tasmanian development is that the Government is claiming a royalty on Tattersall's business.

Those who sincerely desire to reduce the evils of gambling need not look to legalised gambling for a remedy. They will find more hope in adopting the stringent legislation of New South Wales, and especially that of South Australia, where betting in "a public place or any place to which the public has access" is made penal, with fines and imprisonment for a second offence attached.

The Victoria Racing Club would lose a few thousands from bookmakers' registration fees, but it would gain in self-respect in paying for its own sport, and the respect of the general public if it sought to separate racing and gambling as much as possible.