

precautions or diabolical preparations for war. In a modern industrial state there is so much equipment which can instantly be converted from peaceable to warlike uses that it is almost beside the point to debate about the size of battleships, and the number of trainees. The vital point is the good will or otherwise of those who control the policy of nations. When suspicions are once aroused, material will never be lacking to give apparent proof that those suspicions are justified.

How, then, is goodwill to be cultivated? Perhaps only by the spread of knowledge and human contacts across national boundaries. It is essential to make the effort to see world problems through the eyes of the foreigner. Then only will it be possible to frame national policies with due regard to the opinions (however mistaken) of neighbours, and so to build international friendship on sound foundations. Each nation of the modern world can make a great contribution to the common end by setting its own house in order in this respect; for example by realizing how campaigns for more defence expenditure appear as translated into the foreign press. It might be uncomfortable 'to see ourselves as others see us', but it would greatly promote the cause of world peace. At least it might shake the doctrine that political boundaries are the boundaries also of honesty, honour, and perception of truth, which is perhaps the most potent weapon in the hands of the war monger.

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OUR FOREST PROBLEM

By virtue of the fact that she is geographically on the outskirts of civilization, Australia has had to fend for herself. This has been responsible for a concerted effort towards the development of certain primary industries. The process has brought about disastrous results to our forests and forest lands.

We have had the advantage of the experience of other nations, gained over many centuries to guide us in this very important matter, yet we find our people blissfully ignorant of the devastation of millions of acres of our forests. The results of continued denudation are becoming more apparent each year. This heritage should have been protected by a well thought out forestry plan for the removal of mature timber and strict supervision exercised in the cleaning up of forest floors and the regenerative methods.

Let us glance at some of the older nations of the world in this connection. China, for instance, is one of the oldest civilized countries in the world. Today, it has become a land of famine, flood, pestilence, poverty, and chaos. Many millions of her population have died and are still dying through starvation while other millions are drowned by floods. I would suggest that this state of affairs has been largely brought about through the lack of the forest cover of the hillsides. If all a country needed to make it prosperous was cleared land, then China should be the most prosperous country in the world.

A treeless nation is surely a decadent nation. When the forests of a nation are neglected, the mental and moral health of the inhabitants begin to decline. Nations made treeless by the hand of man are dying nations. Nations which once were great and no longer count, are those from which the forests have been ruthlessly exterminated.

Let us take a map of the world and look upon the peoples who are gradually, nationally perishing. Those doomed lands are treeless. They are nations which, once mighty, have become negligible. Neither in industry, science nor art do they now contribute anything vitally constructive or creative. They do not utter any sound in the council of world races, save for a feeble peevish cry. Theirs is a drowsy dream of glories past; an unstirred silence of racial annihilation. Once there were trees in Spain. China grew great forests. So the spectres pass!

When forests go the waters go, the fish and game go, crops go, herds and flocks go, fertility departs. Then the age-old phantoms appear stealthily, one after the other. Flood, drought, fire, famine and pestilence. The picture is not a pleasant one. It seems painfully apparent that the physical health and economic well being of a nation are closely connected with the state of its forests.

Move the picture a little closer home, where we can substantiate these remarks. Take the Hunter River Valley of New South Wales, which is typical. Its wonderful flats at Bolwarra, West Maitland, are recognised the world over as being most fertile and prolific growing areas, rich in plant foods. This land gradually increased in price until farmers were paying upwards of £150 per acre for portions of it. The Valley was selected to its upper reaches and the first thought of the settlers was to clear all timber from their holdings. With the removal of trees, the floor of the earth was soon open to the ravages of erosion. The rain, having direct contact with the land, commences to wash away the valuable top soil or humus. This is carried on to the already rich flats and continually builds up the content of that soil. Thus the upper reaches of the valley have been depreciated of their natural resources and the lower parts have benefited by the silt deposits.

But stop and think — can this go on forever. Definitely no. The hillsides cannot carry on for ever the one-way traffic of supplying humus to the flats. The top-soil

gone, the erosion still goes on and takes the sand and gravel. In the Maitland district in 1930, I saw valuable land covered feet deep with sand and gravel. Whole farms were completely ruined.

In the upper reaches in place of humus we have out-crops of stone which the erosion has laid bare. Benefits which were due to the farmer on the flat have now been received. His share in the future hillside erosion is nothing but rubbish, and his land will surely deteriorate in content, and naturally in value. The minute life of the soil, such as the Lucerne Flea (Hop-tailed beetle) is being gradually forced out from under the ground, where his creative duty is to prepare the decayed matter for consumption by the root system. The floods are bringing with them mineral salts etc, which are distasteful to this insect. In South Australia, it has come above the ground and attacked the green tops of the lucerne with disastrous results. Instead of scientific investigation to entice him back under the ground, a parasite has been discovered (the ballid mite) which is devouring the Lucerne Flea at a great rate. Where will this lead us? This insect surely has a definite and valuable creative work to do in the preservation of the soil.

The birds also are fast disappearing with our trees. They are the natural police of the forest and without them our pests increase rapidly. Our rivers too, are silting up, tending further to aggravate the situation. Too late we may realize the inexorable punishment that is being brought upon ourselves when our homeland is being transformed to an arid, barren and treeless waste. After all, as a primary producing nation our land is the first and most important item of our capital. Yet we allow our hillside soil to wash away, and then still remain calm while the sour mineral salts are taken to spoil the flats that have temporarily benefited. It is really a form of industrial suicide.

There are two ways of facing a desperate situation — get under the bedclothes and try to forget it; or get up and go out and face it! Efficient control should be provided to ensure the replanting of the denuded areas. The

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well-being of this country's primary industries, and probably their very survival lies in the swift resurrection of its forests. Somehow this work will have to be done and done very quickly. It has taken other countries centuries to complete the forest destruction that Australia will have accomplished in less than one hundred years. Would it be too much to suggest that a State law might make it obligatory that a certain percentage of every farm should be planted and maintained in forest? Some people are of the opinion that the demand for trees is fanatical. I am firmly of the opinion that trees are an absolute necessity of every self-supporting nation and that without them disaster is sure. In our own particular case, our primary industries alone present a very urgent case for the restoration of our forests.

There are other considerations which may ultimately be of equal importance. The paper industry, artificial silk, wood-chemical and other cellulose products are becoming more intimately connected with our civilized life. I hope to make these the subject of another article. In this article my aim has been to direct attention to the terrible depreciation that is now taking place in our most important capital asset — our land.

Sydney.

L. J. Jarvis.

THE CHALLENGE OF GAMBLING

TO THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC

THIS title enables one to formulate the cardinal axiom at the base of this brief article viz — the healthy vitality of the Christian or any other ethic is conditioned by the challenge of opposing forces. If these are themselves representative of a higher ethic, they can be sure of ultimate victory. But if — on the other hand, the opposing forces do not represent a higher spiral in the ethical advance, they can be sure of ultimate defeat. This conclusion is not merely the impregnable part of a sane and balanced optimism, but the recognition of something as certain as the fact of Change itself. In the specific question under discussion, the challenge has all the audacity of a popular outlook, entrenched by centuries of custom and widespread geographical expression. But in the modern expression of gambling, is it too much to say that, the acceptance of it by the masses is part of that popular morality which is everywhere throwing up separate standards of conduct, in a world paying little more than lip service to traditional creeds and morality? This is not to deny a similar process in the Past; to recognize that fact only serves to throw into relief the accentuation of the process in the Present and its increasing veneer of respectability. Law-making may be an industrious profession in this complex modern world, but it has little influence upon those to whom 'Gambling [as] the determination of the ownership of property by the appeal to chance', is the spice of life. This definition by J. A. Hobson is extended by Dr R. H. Charles when he says 'Gambling in its simplest form consists in an appeal to chance by two individuals, or groups of individuals: the first end of such an appeal is to give expression to man's inherent love of the game; the second is to transfer a certain amount of property from one individual or group of individuals to another