

EDITORIAL.

‘GIVE me a paper,’ said the Man with the Weary Eyes, ‘in which there are no competitions, and I will read it. I am tired of lotteries, ballots golden or otherwise, cross-words, and picture-puzzles. Any paper that does not want to give me a fortune for nothing I will welcome as an oasis in this desert of competitive frenzy.’

His words were not prompted by disillusionment or disappointment. The rôle of Tantalus, waiting on Fortune to drop her precious gifts within his aching reach, had never appealed to his mind that hated chance. He would never allow himself to be demoralised by getting something for nothing, or a prize out of all proportion to a casual effort. Too great a principle was at stake to indulge in such a gamble.

Real competition is one of the many salts of life. But as soon as the mere gaining of a prize is allowed to become the aim of all striving, the salt loses its savour. When a game degenerates into a contest for something outside itself, it ceases to be a game. It is at once commercialised into a business with a profit and loss account. That is why professional football is no longer a game, but a gamble. Love of sport for what it is and not for what it can get, has yielded to the lures of lucre.

A game well played is always a ‘striving for the mastery,’ but not *vice versa*. Whether the mastery comes or not, the game’s the thing. ‘If there is anything worse than a battle lost,’ it has been said, ‘it can only be a battle won.’ A man who lives only for results usually has no results to live for.

Work and play well done are their own reward. A favourable result can add but an accidental glory. If failure brings disappointment, it shows that the work

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or play has been done in the wrong spirit. The idea of 'mastery' has been uppermost, and the principle of 'striving' sacrificed to a meaner aim. Chance may sometimes bring undeserved success; but the man who lives for chance has lost his soul.

The Man with the Weary Eyes was right. The danger of artificial competitions is that they may be taken seriously. People may be tempted to stretch out their hands towards the golden gifts, and forget that it is by work alone that men must live. They begin to rely on good fortune instead of good work, and to believe that they can win security in life by a stroke of the pen. The glamour of editorial generosity makes the striving of their daily task pale into meanness. They sacrifice the principle of toil well done and justly paid for a hectic dream of independence. One spurt of inspiration may spare them half a century of drudgery.

Competitions should be made illegal. If they do not corrupt public morals, they are likely to corrupt public endeavour and the taste for work. But if they must continue they should be done 'just for amusement,' for the love of the game.

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Readers of BLACKFRIARS will be glad to know that Fr. Robert Bracey has collected his essays into a volume, with the title, *Eighteenth Century Studies*. In an age when the art of the essay is languishing, these delightful studies by a master of the period should win an immediate acceptance from all lovers of English letters. A review of the book will appear in our next issue.

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Those who appreciated the article, 'Henry VIII and a Modern Controversy,' in our February number,

and all who knew the writer, will regret to hear that Fr. Alfred Swaby died suddenly on February 7, without seeing his one contribution to our pages in print. Death was due to an apoplectic stroke, from which, we understand, he never regained consciousness. The dominant note of Fr. Swaby's life was an utterly unselfish devotion to his priestly duty, and a consuming solicitude for the honour of the Mass and the Blessed Sacrament. He was the leading pioneer in the reorganised Blessed Sacrament Guild movement, and in this respect took upon himself, at the invitation of their pastors, 'the solicitude of the churches.' A man beloved of the poor, he found his way into the hearts of all by his genial charity and simplicity.

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The most prominent organ of the daily press, *The Daily Mail*, has recently lauded a timely campaign against the evil practices of our modern Shylocks, whose unscrupulous demands are shown to be responsible in many cases for the social and moral ruin of their unfortunate clients. The result of this publicity is that a Bill will shortly be introduced into Parliament to put legal restraint on the unscrupulous energies of moneylenders.

It is a case of usury *in excelsis*, and against usury in its strict significance the attitude of the Church has never been in doubt. While the receiving of moderate interest on money lent, to cover the risk of loss or inconvenience to the lender, is not technically regarded as usury, to demand excessive interest on a loan has been condemned as a violation of justice human and divine. The essence of usury consists in demanding and receiving interest from the mere fact that a loan has been made. In this strict sense, *i.e.*, from the title of a loan merely, any interest, great or small, is opposed to the law of God and man. But

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some title to moderate interest may arise from another source, namely, any likelihood of the money lent being lost, or any inconvenience and injury the lender may suffer in making the loan. These conditions are extrinsic to the loan itself, and are not in any way an essential part of its nature.

A common rate of interest, therefore, has come to be regarded as a just safeguard of the rights of the lender. But the extortion of excessive interest, which is the common practice of professional moneylenders nowadays, is usury in its most virulent form, and as such must be abolished by act of law.

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