

The Prime Minister's denunciation of public sweepstakes makes it practically certain that there will be no alteration of the law while his Government remains in office. As to another Government, I should be very much astonished to hear that Mr. Baldwin would countenance the proposal, which would in any case be strongly opposed by powerful forces in his party. Many people will regard this as a disappointing view of the matter, but surely it is useless to ignore the plain fact that the legalisation of sweepstakes in this country is not likely to be brought about.

#### £20,000 for a Hospital.

A few months ago Sir Albert Barratt promised to give £20,000 to the Prince of Wales's General Hospital, Tottenham, provided that the public subscribed £10,000 by April 30 to the Special Fund of the hospital. Unfortunately the public did not do so, but Sir Albert Barratt, in view of the pressing needs of the hospital, has most generously withdrawn the condition attaching to his gift, and has sent a cheque for £20,000 to the hospital. It is to be hoped that the public will now follow the lead that Sir Albert Barratt's munificence has given them and raise the £10,000.

#### Casuals in Clover.

If Charles Dickens were to revisit the earth he would probably most rub his eyes at the changes that have taken place in Poor Law administration. In recent years they have been so many that now the casuals are housed in greater comfort than a considerable number of the settled population. A further advance in the standard of comfort is recommended in a Ministry of Health report just issued to local authorities. Bumble would "stare and gasp" to find that the Ministry suggests the provision of spring mattresses and overlays for all beds; shaving mirrors in the bathrooms; shower, spray, and foot baths; "ablution basins" with hot and cold water in all wards, and central heating to be maintained up to a sufficiently late hour.

To forestall the criticism that these innovations will encourage professional vagrancy, the report states that "it is the small, ill-found, ill-administered country ward" which proves most attractive to habitual vagrants. So far, so good. Nobody wants the victim of circumstances to be penalised for no fault of his own, and the vagrant *malgré lui* should be given humane treatment. But it seems to be carrying things a little far to have, for example, three sorts of baths in casual wards. How many private houses can boast a "spray"?

#### Declining Prison Population.

If the decline in prison population continues at its present rate the prisons will soon be as empty as most of the theatres. According to the report of H.M. Prison Commissioners, the average prison population between 1913 and 1929 decreased from 18,155 to 10,861, and during the seven years ending December 31, 1929, the imprisonments of men fell by 15 per cent. and of women by 41 per cent. These figures are very satisfactory, but they must not be taken only as proof of the growing righteousness of the people. The greater leniency of judicial tribunals, at any rate as far as indict-

able offences are concerned, must also be considered. Crimes which a generation or so ago would have been punished with a sentence of imprisonment, are now often dealt with by "binding over" the offender.

The figures for non-indictable offences, however, do support the contention that we grow better with the years. For example, between 1910-1914 the average yearly convictions for drunkenness were nearly 200,000. In 1929 they were just over 50,000. Likewise, assaults, begging offences, prostitution, and gaming, all show a marked decline, a social phenomenon on which we can legitimately congratulate ourselves. The criminal and anti-social offender are types which may have their value as ingredients of sensational fiction, but in real life they are a nuisance and a liability.

#### The Menace of Matrimonial Agencies.

In its many warnings against matrimonial agencies, TRUTH has always stressed the opportunities these agencies give to unscrupulous men of preying on credulous women. Frank Kettleborough, of Claverton Street, Pimlico, can be taken as the type of the vultures who use matrimonial agencies for their own ends. At Leicester last week he was sentenced to five years' penal servitude for what the Recorder described as "the most heartless and cruel fraud I have ever tried." Under promise of marriage Kettleborough obtained £711 from five women, whom he had met through a matrimonial agency. As these concerns always boast that they take no client who has not furnished unimpeachable credentials, it is interesting to learn that Kettleborough's record included several convictions for theft and a fraud. In 1923 he was sentenced to three years' penal servitude. Yet he had no difficulty in getting into touch through a matrimonial agency with nearly a hundred women!

#### The Gaming Table in the Streets.

In one of Disraeli's novels somebody remarked that the popularisation of the sport of racing had brought the gaming table into the streets. It was a picturesque exaggeration then, but who can deny the truth of the statement now? Youthful clerks in TRUTH Office supplied me with evidence of the latest development in the shape of circulars of the National Turf Credit Federation, 2, Little Sussex Place, W., soliciting bets on the Derby of any amount from 2s. 6d. to £2 or £5 (both amounts were mentioned as the maximum). The circulars were distributed to all and sundry in Victoria Street and the Strand, and for the guidance of those "unacquainted with betting" a calculation was given of the sum that would be gained—"please state if winnings should be sent to you in bank notes or by cheque"—by backing a winner at 100 to 1. Lest this should fail to whet the appetite of the greenhorns, the Federation added the lure of a free entry in a £1,000 competition for the placing of the first four horses.

Condemnation of this discreditable and mischievous business will not be confined to anti-gamblers, and I feel sure that every responsible employer in Westminster will agree with TRUTH that such a method of tempting youths in offices to engage in betting transactions ought to be treated as a punishable offence. Its

ROYAL SOCIETY FOR PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS, 2447 convictions, 21,325 cautions, during 1930. Complaints marked 'Private' absolutely confidential.—Secy, 105, Jermyn St., London.

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