



'BOOKMAKERS,' said a member of the House on Thursday night, 'are a much maligned class.' The observation is not overwhelmingly original, but so few persons have been willing to champion the bookmaker in public that it is not unworthy of notice. Moreover, on reflection, not entirely unmixt with reminiscences, we think that the hon. member (Mr Lawry if memory serves) was in the right. The system of betting with bookmakers is about as mischievous a form of gambling as can well be imagined, and for this reason we hope the totalisator will long reign in its stead; but it is the system of betting and not the medium that is to be condemned. The calling is not, we admit, one of the highest or one of the most useful, but on the other hand it scarcely deserves all the obloquy that has from time immemorial been cast upon it. It is rank injustice to grapple the stock and sharebroker to the hearts of society with hoops of steel, and to thrust the bookmaker into the outer darkness—a social pariah for whom no name is bad enough. Both make a living by gambling, and if there is a point in favour of one or the other it lies with the bookmaker in that he never recommends any special horse to the attention of his clients, whereas a sharebroker—well, most people have had experience of their fairly tales.

As a class, bookmakers are considerably less black than they are painted. There are scamps amongst them, as there are in all professions, but if all owners were as honest as the majority of the members of 'Tattersall's' bookmakers, racing would be a cleaner and more profitable pastime. The fact that the totalisator is less mischievous than the bookmaker is not because the latter is necessarily a scamp, but because he will bet 'on the nod,' that is to say, on credit. The ill effect of this is obvious. A weak-minded mortal imagines a certain horse cannot lose, and that in wagering six or seven times his entire monetary possessions he is running no risk. He meets the bookmaker who books the bet, to be paid by either party the Monday after the race. The good thing goes wrong, the moral fails to come off, as morals usually do, and the bettor is driven to embezzlement in order to meet his engagements. For some reason or other society has seen fit to place much of the blame attaching to such a catastrophe on the shoulders of the bookmaker. This is not altogether unnatural, but it is desperately unfair. No more serious reflection should rest on the character of bookmakers because their clients are sometimes tempted to dishonesty, than rests on the character of the creditors to whom one of our honoured bankrupts has paid a fraction of a penny in the pound. The late Mr Montagu Williams was not only the most brilliant criminal lawyer the last decade has seen, and the most successful police magistrate London ever had, but a most inveterate enemy of rogues and vagabonds of any description. He has probably opened the eyes of the innocent to more winding humbugs and evilhoers of all sorts and conditions than any man who has lived during the last century. Yet Mr Williams, in his book 'Round London,' sticks up manfully for the much-abused bookmaker. And since the opinion of such an authority cannot be without weight or interest, we quote it in full in support of our own opinion, that the bookmaker is not so black as he is painted.

'I HAVE,' says Mr Montagu Williams, 'always thought that it is manifestly unfair to abuse the bookmaker and treat him as a sort of social pariah. This is, however, precisely what is done by a great many persons. Have my readers ever observed what advantage is taken of this feeling in a court of law? A man steps into the witness-box, and counsel or a solicitor puts the question: "What are

you?" Fearing something unpleasant, the witness assumes the defensive, and replies: "A commission agent." "Indeed," is the retort; "and pray what is that? What sort of a commission agent are you?" "On the turf," is the dogged reply. "Oh, now I begin to understand," observes the cross-examiner triumphantly. "You are in fact a bookmaker!" The witness mutters an affirmative reply, and his tormentor, it may be, resumes his seat with the air of a man who has laid bare so gross a case of human depravity that any further questioning would be wholly superfluous. The witness having been proved in open court to be none other than a bookmaker, the magistrate or jury is, in effect, invited to regard his credit as damned through all eternity.

'WHAT is the bookmaker's crime? What evil can be attributed to him which has not as its fountain-head the system which has given him birth? If you hear a member of the upper classes declaiming against bookmakers, and you ask him what he can charge against them, you will receive some such answer as this: "Oh, they are such pinchers; they give such shabbily low prices." My reply to this would be that the price need not be accepted; that its acceptance is quite a voluntary act on the part of the backer; and that, whatever else may be said against the bookmakers, no one would deny that they pay when they lose. As a matter of fact, they are bound to do so. If they did not settle every Monday morning after a race meeting, their credit would be irretrievably lost, and they could no longer pursue their calling. Absolutely no grace is allowed to them. Moreover, those who complain of the short prices given by the bookmaker seem quite to forget the thousands of pounds these individuals lose through not being paid.'

PERHAPS the most sensible remark made in Parliament last week was that which suggested that the term 'Labour Member' should now be consigned to the limbo of things for which there is no longer any use or necessity. In a democratic country like this, with the one man one vote principle in working order, and where the labouring class possess an overwhelming majority, it is manifest that every member of the House is the elect of the working man, and be he Liberal or Radical—Conservatives are obsolete in New Zealand—he is equally entitled to call himself a Labour Member. Those who arrogate to themselves the title at present, are, as the blunt spoken member who suggested the abolition of the term plainly hinted, by no means those who achieve most for the workin' man, who, to tell the truth, stands a good chance of being killed by kindness in this much over-legislated colony. The term 'Labour Member' is indeed beginning to have a very ancient and fishy, if not fish-like smell in the nostrils of the majority of persons who take any interest in this colony. It is beginning to be recognised that there are other persons besides the working man in the world, and that those who have not had the fortune to be born 'orny-anded' should yet in justice be allowed such crumbs of State attention as fall from the table of that mighty magnate. The average member of the House of Representatives has grasped this fact. They will look after the interests of the working classes—they dare not do otherwise even if they would—but they do not think it necessary to obstruct all other business in order to obtain this end. The so-called and self-styled labour member does, and thus earns for himself a certain notoriety and advertisement denied his harder working colleagues. If, as Mr Crowther, M.H.R., no doubt imagines, the abolition of the term labour member will in any way cripple the blatant and ignorant humbugs who so call themselves, the sooner the very existence of the words are forgotten the better.

It must certainly, we imagine, be desperately disconcerting to be caught spooning while sitting out at a large dance. So many cases have occurred in Sydney lately that in our journal the society correspondent devotes a paragraph of advice as to the best mode of prevention, since cure there is none. 'I notice,' she says, 'at balls and "sich" that when you round a corner and come plump on Phyllis and Strephon it is nearly always a young man who is caught red handed, as it were. I suppose the moral is—do not "sit out" with anybody under forty (I am speaking to "women only," of course), for the young man has not been preying on society long enough to know the no-thoughtness of public buildings, and he sports with Amaryllis, not in the shade, alas! but under a forty-horse-power glare, although there may be an ocean of gloom and potted plants round the next bend. I have never—empatically never—caught an older imprinting a salute upon mademoiselle's ear-lobes, or doing anything to make

the groundings giggle as they pass. Mature manhood doesn't amuse itself to amuse the public, too, but it doesn't miss the fun of the fair either. Therefore, O you many maidens who are prone to being bugged by many adorers before the dances, pause before you trust your sentimental fortunes for the evening with a mere seedling Lothario!

ONE of the most interesting topics of the moment is, of course, the abolition or retention of the well-known and popular Bellamy's. The shock of the sudden realisation of the immediate necessity for relieving the pressure on the Bank of New Zealand a few days ago was nothing compared to the shock experienced by M.H.R.s when Major Harris exploded his little bomb into the midst of a peaceful House. His motion that 'in the opinion of this House, the sale of beer, wine, and spirituous liquors should be discontinued at Bellamy's,' came as a surprise—and an unpleasant one—to his fellow statesmen. But their feelings were by no means so strongly stirred as were those of absent members who had no opportunity given them of expressing their unqualified disapproval of so stern and sweeping a change—reformation, the Prohibitionists call it. After all, it would be unwise to prevent the sale of intoxicating liquors within the precincts of the House. For not all the New Zealand representatives are teetotalers, and if—though we know perfectly well that this never is the case—but if, some drear, wet night, one of the members were to take a little drop to keep the cold out, and then a wee drop more just to keep that one warm inside, and then a tiny taste for luck, and a minute monthful for manners, until he was just a trifle merry and a shade unsteady on his feet, supposing, I say, such an unprecedented thing should happen, would it not be better it should occur within the sacred enclosure of Bellamy's, and under the eyes of M.H.R.s and M.L.C.s, where it might serve as a warning and an object lesson, rather than in one of the neighbouring public bars, where such an appalling spectacle as a slightly intoxicated member, would only be a subject for ribald jokes and irreverent laughter. We cannot have our representatives laughed at or made fun of. We must, therefore, remove any occasion for the enemy to blaspheme, and keep temptation safely hidden away from the eyes of a too condemnatory world.

SOME people urge that the temptation should be removed altogether from the land. This might be a good thing, but it must not be a local affair; one set of licensing committee men must not be allowed to abolish drinking shops, whilst others encourage them. It is grossly unfair to those who are making their living by providing a certain kind of liquid refreshment for the public, to close all the hotels on one side of the street, and open new ones on the other side. If Prohibition is a good thing for the colony, let it be undertaken systematically and fairly. Perhaps some of the late sittings are carried on by other adjuncts to conversation than tea and coffee, soda-water and lemonade. Perhaps if there were no little refreshers of another kind to be obtained, members would not feel energetic enough to sit up all night building stone walls, hurling dictionaries of vituperation at each other, and talking tiresomely. They might feel tired and go to bed in good time, and sleep, and wake up refreshed, and actually start work earlier in the day, and get through it more easily with less sleepy indifference or midnight brawling. And then the session might become a day-dream of pleasure instead of a nightmare of toil. Let us drink, therefore, to the success of the Prohibitionists.

It has been proposed, that a building should be erected in Chelsea, London, for the purpose of experimenting with M. Pasteur's latest discoveries. Naturally, this has raised a howl once more from the anti-vivisectionists, who seemingly prefer that on human beings alone, all experiments should be made. One paper—a ladies' paper, of course, says:—'Mercy is, or at any rate should be such an essentially womanly virtue that this is a matter women may well bestir themselves in without censure, and it is to be hoped every woman will use her influence and interest in every possible way to help abolish this blot on civilization and gross cruelty, committed in the name of science, the horrors of which can only be estimated by those who understand the dumb creatures who serve and love us so faithfully.'

THE very column which contains this appeal to women also contains some illustrations of the new fashions, many of which inflict the greatest possible cruelty on innocent birds and animals. Do the seals love being skinned? Do the birds cheerfully sacrifice a wing, or the tender down of their breasts destined for the warmth and comfort of their little ones? Do bears and other far-bearing animals willingly lay down their lives to clothe fashionable women, and trim the winter coats of stylish men? I trow not. Then let these anti-vivisectionists devote their breath, their ink and paper and time towards this luxurious form of cruelty to animals, and let alone experiments which are made, not in mere wantonness, not to gratify the British desire to kill something, but solely from a wish to cure disease, and mitigate the terrible pains of suffering humanity. Are we not much better than the beasts that perish? Is not the life of one man possessing an immortal soul better worth