

another Martini-Henri crops up or the totalisator is done away with, there will not be another 2,000 guinea yearling in Auckland.

As John Rae has thought fit to attack me through the columns of another paper, I must, in justice to myself, make some remarks regarding his letter that appeared in the *Herald* of the 22nd inst. That the letter was composed by himself I have great doubts, as, judging from the vile language he sometimes uses in the saddling paddock, one would put him down as having been brought up in anything but a refined school. From the tenor of his letter Rae thinks that because he fraternises with certain sporting writers, and chums with some "turf" gentlemen, that no one must criticise his doings, or any horse under his charge. The first thing he takes umbrage at is the following remark that appeared in one of my articles:—"Morion, 8st 7lb, heads the list. If he gets his head loose he should win, but I hardly think his party will do it for the paltry sum of £20." Any one of education and knowledge of racing will see that this reads more ways than one, so if Rae likes to adapt it to himself he is welcome, as he is not immaculate. The next thing is another remark I made regarding his "peculiar" riding of Lonely at the late Takapuna meeting. If I am not much mistaken I owned and rode steeplechase horses long before Rae was born, and my instructor—old Tom Oliver, who used to ride for my father—always impressed three things on me—never lie too far out of your ground; it is as easy to wait in front as it is behind; and, learn to judge the pace. Not one of these rules did Rae observe. If he can conscientiously declare that he rode Lonely to the best of his judgment, all I can say is that he is a worse jockey than I gave him the credit of being. In the concluding part of his letter he goes on to state "one often hears with regret of the obliteration of that good feeling that in old times was such a characteristic at our race meetings," etc. If such is the case, it is owing to two causes. The first is the good old class of trainers who knew their business—such as Cutts, Thorpe, French, etc.—are dying out, and their places are being filled by young fellows, the majority of whom are no better than stable boys, and who cannot keep a civil or respectful tongue in their heads, nor know how to behave themselves. Secondly—since the introduction of the totalisator there has been a class of men come on the turf that really cannot afford to keep a racehorse, so they must naturally either "go for the gloves" or enter into partnership with these so-called trainers. The consequence is there is much more roping than there used to be, as they must have money somehow. Since I first commenced I have always written without bias, and if I see anything that I consider from my experience is not correct, I shall not hesitate to make comments on it, never mind if the perpetrator is in a high or low position, and no letters from John Rae or anyone else will cause me to deviate from what I consider the proper course of writing, and in future I shall not only pay particular attention to the running of the horses out of Rae's stable, but also to them both before and after the races.

The first day's racing of the A.R.C. which took place last Saturday at Ellerslie was of an interesting character. Followers of "book form," however, were completely out in several instances, and in more than one race there was great reversal of form. Too much reliance must not be placed on the result of some of the running as regards future events, as the starting, especially in the two-year-old races and Railway Handicap, was very bad. The racing commenced with the Trial Stakes, 1 mile, for which five started. Clanranald gave us a taste of his quality over this distance by giving Flinders 5lb, and beating him cleverly by three parts of a length. This, I confess, I did not think him capable of doing. The local horses had no show with these two.

The Great Northern Foal Stakes was robbed of a great deal of its interest by the wretched start. Whakawatea, who exhibits the temper of the Apremont stock, not only got the best but also a flying start, Brown Alice, of course, having none the worst of it, while Stepniak and North Atlantic lost a lot of ground. Under these circumstances it is no wonder that Whakawatea won easily, as he is a fast colt.

though his staying abilities are to be questioned, and the next time they meet with a fair start, Stepniak should prove the better of the pair, and that North Atlantic will beat Brown Alice. Why the latter was made such a favourite on the machine is hard to understand, as she can only be called moderate. Neither St. Hippo or His Worship ran as forward as I anticipated.

The Auckland Cup was robbed of a good deal of its interest owing to the scratching of Lebel and British Lion. The result was a regular knock down blow to the *cognoscenti*, the places being filled by three rank outsiders, the favourites never being in the race. Pinfire's win did not surprise me, as it will be remembered that in my article in the *SPORTING REVIEW* of the 17th inst., I said, "If Pinfire, 6st 10lb, could be brought fit and well to the post, he should have an outside show, but if the ground continues hard that contingency is very remote." His defeat in the South Auckland Cup by Loch Ness pointed to the fact that he was not up to the mark. French deserves great credit for pulling off the Cup with the horse, who is troubled with bad knees, especially when you take into consideration how hard the ground has been. It is a curious coincidence that when the Cup was last won by the Papakura stable in 1876, Kingfisher, 5 years old, carried 6st 10lb, and left the paddock at the outside price of 100 to 3. That Coalscuttle and The Dreamer would fill the situations I never for one moment thought. Fraternite's running was disappointing, and evidently proves that he cannot stay. My readers will remember that I would never stand Hilda to win, and it was only when the field got so weak that I assigned her a chance of a place. Mr. Morrin must now regret that he did not relegate Hilda to the stud in the Spring when he was advised to, as he would not only have saved himself but the public a lot of money.

Five started for the Hurdle Race. Lonely, 10st 6lb, was made a great favourite, and won easily by six lengths from Fishmonger, 10st 7lb; Orakei 10st 8lb, Capella 9st 3lb, and Try Fluke 9st, being the others. Here is reversal of form with a vengeance. At the Takapuna meeting Lonely, 11st 4lb, ran nowhere in the Maiden Hurdle Race; the field consisting of a lot of hacks. Now he comes out and easily beats the best horses we have in Auckland over sticks. My readers will perhaps now see that I had some reason for saying that Rae's riding of Lonely at Takapuna was peculiar.

Reprisal showed that he is possessed of a good turn of speed, by disposing of ten others in the Railway Handicap, but too much reliance must not be placed on this running, as there was a great deal of messing about at the post, and when the flag did fall the start was indifferent.

When the weights first appeared for the Nursery Handicap I pointed out that it was one of the worst Mr. Evitt had ever issued, and that Glenora, of the known ones, was thrown in. Mr. Evitt, with his usual luck and the starter's assistance, gets out of it, as Wyvern, getting the best of a bad start, wins, Glenora only getting third.

The Maiden Steeplechase fell, as I anticipated, to The Colonel.

The Christmas Handicap showed horses in different form. Loch Ness, who beat Pinfire in the South Auckland Cup, is made a great favourite, but runs nowhere, while Fiesole, 8st, wins a head from Morion, 7st 8lb; Dreamer 7st 6lb, 3rd; Dolosa 7st 7lb, and Tulloch 6st 8lb, being behind. On looking back it will be seen that this is greatly improved form on the part of the two first horses, especially Morion, who is pounds better than when he lately ran.

It is to be hoped that there will be an improvement in the starting during the next two days, or it will be useless for me to wade through the handicaps in hopes of giving my readers a winner or two.

A.R.C. SECOND DAY.

The weights for the different races for the second day of the Auckland Racing Club are now before me. As the acceptances are not declared until too late to go through them, I must take the handicaps as they stand, pointing out what appears a discrepancy and selecting those that appear well in on paper. Mr. Evitt of late has made some extraordinary handicaps, but his proverbial luck, assisted by

the starter, has generally pulled him through on the right side, therefore it is rather a difficult thing to pull his work to pieces. If the starting for the next two days' racing is going to be as atrociously bad as it was in the first day, it is waste of time to go through the handicaps for the short races, and it would be folly to attempt to pick a winner or encourage any of my readers to back a horse.

The first race is the New Year's Hurdle Race. It is a 2lb heavier handicap than the last one, therefore we will take Fishmonger, 10st 9lb, as the base to work upon, as he has virtually the same weight as on Boxing Day. As Sentinel, 12st, declined the last one, he will most likely do the same now, and be kept for the Steeplechase; should he start he will take a great deal of beating, as he is a good horse over the sticks. Lonely gets 13lb more, which, considering the easy way he won on Saturday, will hardly bring him back to Fishmonger. Orakei gets 3lb more, and if he was meant last time, he has no chance. Bit o' Blue is almost sure to be an absentee; in no case do I think he could win. Good Day gets 10lb more. Though he did not start on Saturday I suppose Mr. Evitt has done this, as he does not intend to be caught napping with Rae's stable again. Yardman, who was the first scratched when the weights appeared for the last hurdle race, has 7lb less, but his stable companion Capella has only 2lb more, and I have reason to believe that when she made the mistake she held them all—with the exception of the winner—safe, and she ought decidedly to have had a few pounds more. I do not think the winner will come from the ragged division—Tawhana and Try Fluke being the best of them. Taking the handicap all through, the following read the best—Sentinel, Lonely, or Good Day; but if compelled to back one I should prefer Fishmonger, as with him you would be sure of a fair run for your money, while with some of the others you are not.

The Newmarket Handicap has an entry of sixteen. It being a sprint race of six furlongs, it is waste of time to go through it with Mr. Buckland as starter—he never was and never will be able to start properly. However, as Mr. Evitt has done some curious work, I will go into it. Why should Resentment go up 7lb while The Dancer only gets 4lb more for running second in the Railway Handicap, while Lady Belle and Roie get respectively 8lb and 9lb off, and Vieux Rose 4lb less—their previous performances have been better than Resentment? Those that look best on paper are Reprisal, The Baron, Queen of Trumps, and Lady Bell, though it must be borne in mind that Van Diemen can gallop a bit, but if I was a betting man, I would, under the circumstances, leave the race alone.

There are nine remaining in the Great Northern Derby, but as the forfeit is declared the day before the race, some are sure to drop out. Mr. Stead has Lebel engaged, but he went amiss and was struck out of the Auckland Cup, therefore it must be presumed that he will not be fit for this race. If Lebel was fit I would not look further than him for the winner. Clanranald gave Flinders 5lb and beat him easily in the Trial Stakes, 1 mile. The question is can he get the extra half mile? I think he can on an easy course like Ellerslie. Fraternite ran well for a mile and a half with 7st 13lb in the Cup, and has previously got the distance. Morion and The Workman may start, but on previous form they cannot have any chance; while Lady Belle and Dancer are likely to be absentees. So with Lebel amiss one is left with Fraternite, Clanranald, and Flinders to choose from. If the former is none the worse for his race in the Cup I prefer him, but it should be a close race between the three.

The Midsummer Handicap, 5 furlongs, is another sprint race, and as it is for two-year-olds it makes it all the worse to try and select the winner. In this race there are some peculiar discrepancies in the weights. In the Great Northern Foal Stakes, Brown Alice received 5lb from North Atlantic, and beat him. Now he has to give her 10lb. In the Nursery Handicap Puwerewere gives Glenora 2lb and beats her; now she receives 1lb. Then Wyvern has only to give Puwerewere 2lb, while Glenora has actually to give him 1lb for the beating he gave them in the Nursery Handicap. It is a difficult race to touch until the acceptances are out, as it is well known that good two-year-olds can give any amount of weight to moderate ones;