

public knew little or nothing of how much was betted on any particular horse, as the layer of the odds was unlikely to acquaint them; hence an owner was more than likely to run "for the stuff." Now, however, an owner sees at a glance how the "cat jumps" with the public, and if his horse be well backed he decides on running a "slinter," and perhaps saves his exs. with some other good one in the race. Thereafter he "bobs up" and makes a good *coup*; likewise the other fellow.

This state of affairs, I am sorry to say, is aided and abetted—I might almost say encouraged—by those in command of totalisator affairs.

Take, for example, many of our suburban meetings, and what do we find—two or three machines at work and each added to the other in computing the total. At Ellerslie, I am glad to say, two machines are going, and the div. on each machine is computed separately and individually. In other cases, though, it is not the same—for example, suburban and trotting club meetings. There we have two or more machines computed together and a dividend declared accordingly. Why is this thus? Why not calculate each one separately? Evidently those "in the know" want to "gull" the public, and take these means of doing so. Let us for a moment look at the following well known items of every day occurrence at our suburban and trotting meetings.

No. 1 machine is close to and in view of the grandstand, No. 2 is an inside machine also within view; but No. 3 is not in such position. A wants to back B's horse, and on looking at Nos 1 and 2, and the odds thereon, is tempted to invest. Imagine his consternation and chagrin then on finding that the dividend is computed on the three machines, and that, although he counted only on Nos. 1 and 2, the owner or other interested parties have "backed it up" on No. 3, and the odds by which he was induced to invest have been reduced to an enormous extent. These are the "muckles" which make up the "muckles" upon which popular racing rests; and they would be well to be rectified at once. Much more might be said on this subject than I have indulged in; and should necessity occasion further "remarks" I shall deem it my duty, as a sporting writer, to draw full attention to them; but I trust this warning note will suffice to put all those interested in the future welfare of the machine on the *qui vive* to remedy such existing abuses and render the totalisator that "power for good" for which it was originally intended. Of course a totalisator monopoly would be preferable to a "bookmaker's" monopoly, but it must be patent to the most superficial observer that either must, in the end, prove fatal to the interests of racing and sport generally. Every business man or firm considers the wishes of his patrons in order to make the concern pay, and so it will prove with racing and totalisator men. Rest assured if trickery and dodgery be indulged in, so assuredly will a day of reckoning arrive, and the results of past misdeeds and dishonesty cannot help but culminate in dishonour and degradation to genuine sport of all kinds, as well as to those so closely connected with its immediate ruination and downfall.

On the subject of starting we have made "remarks" oftentimes, and whenever bad starting occurred reference has always been made to it, and things were sure to be "sultry" for the starter. It would seem that turf scribes in the other colonies as well as America have had occasion to draw attention also to the matter of bad starting, for we find these remarks at different times have attracted the attention of "Rapier," the turf scribe of the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, published in England. In a recent article on the subject, he says:—"From one trouble which seems very seriously to affect owners of horses and all interested in an animal's success abroad we in this country are happily free. Nothing is more common in foreign papers—American, Colonial, and others—than the gravest complaints against the starter. A few good starters there may be, and indeed doubtless are, but unless journals greatly err, a considerable proportion of starters abroad are either incompetents or rogues. It would surely surprise those who suffer under the ministrations of such starters as these—some of whom seem to be overbearing bullies, in addition to their other failings or vices—to note the

methods of Mr. Arthur Coventry, his patience, unfailing good humour, quickness of perception to catch the one happy moment when he can despatch his field, and anxiety to do absolute justice to every horse. A more temper-trying business than starting a big field of horses is not easily imagined. Time after time the field is almost in a line; if I am at the start I can imagine that 'Now they're off' is a general comment of observers on the Stands, who have their glasses focused on the field; but again and again one beast jumps off by himself, or another will not be kicked or coaxed up by others, or both brutes together unite to destroy the chance. I confess it is a marvel to me that Mr. Coventry preserves his equanimity and contrives to say, 'Go back, please'—actually 'please'—instead of thundering out something of a very different character. Just so. But Mr. Arthur Coventry seldom has to contend with riders who do not want to win and are therefore deliberately trying to get a bad start."

The same writer then states that the above ideas were suggested by an article which appeared in the American *Horseman* on starters. His opinion of the article was that it was a "hot" one, and he thinks that the men mentioned therein must be rogues, or the law of libel in America is strangely inefficient, if they do not refute the charges made against them. The American article in question reads as follows:—"A starter should start his horses without any reference to betting. He should neither give favourites undue protection, nor should he leave them at the post. Mr. Chinn, at Garfield Park, was guilty of a 'leave' that would have made even the shameless Caldwell blush. The writer remembers seeing Caldwell deliberately leave Beck at the post, or, rather, try to do so, at Jerome Park three or four years ago, simply because of a row with the boy Bergen, who rode Beck. The other day at Garfield Park Martin Russell started, and properly so, favourite. He could hardly have lost had the starter not decided that he should lose. Palisade, who is owned by B. J. Johnson, said to be a partner of George V. Hankins, one of the principal proprietors of Garfield Park, was second favourite. Mr. Chinn spoiled seven or eight good starts, apparently for the benefit of Palisade, who was pulled up every time he had not the best of the start. It is a very peculiar fact that, although the boy on Martin Russell obeyed the starter's orders implicitly, he was left at the post the first time his head was turned the wrong way. Was there any good reason to fear that he might have beaten Palisade? Mr. Lewis Clarke overruled a decision of Starter John Merrill at Garfield Park not long ago, and caused that excellent official to leave the employ of the club. But neither Colonel Clark nor Robert A. Swigert, who is associated with him in the judge's stand, saw *anything* wrong in the rank Martin Russell decision."

I fancy there would be "steep ructions" were we to use such strong invectives in our criticisms as those used by the American writer whom "Rapier" has drawn attention to.

OUR WELLINGTON LETTER.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT)
[BY WIRE.]

WELLINGTON, March 22.
THE local horses had the worst of luck at last week's meetings. They did not gain a single race at Hawke's Bay. Retina, it is generally thought, ought to have won the Cup, but the fates were adverse, and she could only finish a good second to Crown Jewel. Colello, who was to have had the mount, could not get down within 5lbs. of the weight, and rather than carry overweight Tom Hill and her owner, Mr. Martin, decided to put up Tommy Crook, the stable light-weight, who, although he rode a good race, lacked the strength to finish. It was very tantalising for Mr. Martin to see his good thing go down when victory seemed assured. To make things worse, Raneé Nuna, who was reckoned a good thing for at least one race, developed a suspicious leg after the Wanganui meeting, and although she started in two races on the first day she failed altogether to run up to her recent form. Mr. Hill came back with the filly on Saturday night, leaving Retina, who will run at Napier Park to-morrow, under the care of Mr. Hunter's trainer, Gooseman, who has nothing engaged at the meeting.

At Masterton, Opaki, on Thursday, the meeting was spoiled by the delay in bringing off the events, which dragged out the programme until nearly half-past six, whereas the last race was set down for 4.40 p.m. The principal races, the St. Patrick's Handicap and Flying Stakes, were appropriated by Mr. Freeth's Revolution, a four-year-old full brother to Rebellion, by Treason—Mischief. This horse was last season run as a hack, and could scarcely win a race in any company. This season he has developed into a real good one, and has carried all before him among the up-country racehorses. He is like Rebellion, a strapping chestnut.

At the Marlborough meeting neither Eros nor Paramu. Mr. Cousen's representatives, got a place. Mr. Redwood had another good turn, winning the Cup with his second string, Teri, 8st 8lb, after the handicapper had crushed Awarua Rose with 9st 7lb. There was great surprise in Wellington at Rocket paying £16 9s. dividend in the Flying. This horse is a son of Leos, and simply romped over a field of good hacks at the Hutt in the spring. He was freely backed at starting price in Wellington, and great was the delight of those who had invested on him, as they expected about £3. There is a row in Wellington over these races. They were postponed from Friday to Saturday on account of bad weather, and no press telegrams were sent through on Saturday to say whether they had come off or not. They did come off, however, and some of the clever division, after spreading a report that they had been again postponed until Tuesday, got two bookmakers to lay the winners on Saturday evening. Of course there is a dispute over the affair, and the backers have served the layers with a lawyer's letter. What will be the upshot of the affair I hardly know, but it is scarcely likely to come into Court.

A meeting of the stewards of the Wellington Racing Club was held to-night. The principal business was the consideration of applications for the position of caretaker for the Hutt Park racecourse, but owing to the absence from Wellington of a number of the stewards it was decided to postpone dealing with the matter for a week. In the meantime the applications (fifty-nine in number) were referred to the Course Committee, with a request that they should report upon the qualifications of the most suitable candidates. A letter was received from the Wanganui Jockey Club, notifying that Messrs. Yuille, Nathan and May had been warned off the Wanganui racecourse for laying totalisator odds. The question of dealing with the matter was left over to be dealt with by a fuller meeting. The programme of the Horowhenua Jockey Club's race meeting, to be held at Otaki on Queen's Birthday, was submitted for approval, and being in order, was passed. The added money to be given amounts to £160, divided amongst seven events, the principal being the Horowhenua Cup Handicap of 35 sovs., one mile and a half. Mr. T. Franklyn was elected a stewards' director of the Hutt Park Railway Company for the ensuing year.

OUR TARANAKI LETTER.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

NEW PLYMOUTH, March 18.
THE annual hack meeting of the Waverley Waitotara Racing Club was held on Thursday. The wet weather in the morning affected the attendance, and also made the going a bit heavy, which fact no doubt accounted for the many "boil-overs" that occurred during the day. The Hurdles, 1½ miles, was a walk-over for The Masher, by Captivator—Day Dawn mare, who had 9st 7lb to carry. Baccarat, the other acceptor for the Hurdles, was reserved for the Cup, in which his following backed him up to the handle on the strength of a trial, but were disappointed. The Flying Handicap, 5 furlongs, was won by Bradshaw, by Castoff—Lady, 6st 9lb, Armoury, 6st 7lb, being second, and Tramore, 8st 5lb, third. The winner paid the nice dividend of £45, his owners, Messrs. Goodson, having four out of the five tickets on the board. This is the first turn of luck Goodsons have had since they started to run horses. Pat Eva rode the winner. Time, 1 min. 23sec. The New Plymouth mare Armoury, by Armourer—Garry Owen mare, won the Catch Weights, four furlongs, being ridden by C. Riley. The dividend was £3 11s. Sirius, 8st 11lbs, by Australian—Traucer mare, another New Ply-