



The Hawke's Bay Jockey Club brought off their Autumn Meeting on Wednesday and Thursday of last week in seasonable enough weather, though it had been raining before the meeting and a few misty showers fell during its progress. The course was holding, so much so that the times for the various races were the slowest recorded for some years past. The meetings are held later in the season than they used to be, and there is always a risk of weather conditions not being quite perfect. The extensive improvements were referred to last week, and they are certainly of an up-to-date character. The stewards entertained their guests well and made the day of the opening of the new stands and buildings a red-letter one in the history of the club. The Minister for Internal Affairs (the Hon. Mr. Bell) officially opened the stand, referring in an appropriate speech to the present and past supporters of racing in Hawke's Bay, the late Sir William Russell being spoken of as a Bayard and the Hon. J. D. Ormond, M.L.C., as a Nestor of the New Zealand Turf. The hon. gentleman drew a comparison between the Temple of the High Priests and the splendid edifices erected by the strong committee of progressive representatives of the racing people of Hawke's Bay, and reminded them that they held a great key—a golden key—to the situation, and would know how to treat those who despised their sports. The stewards' luncheon room presented a unique picture. Each steward had a table, and on each their racing colours were displayed, and on printed cards the names of the two best or favourite racehorses they had owned were displayed. Some cracks, it is needless to say, were included in the number, champions on the flat and flyers over fences. Soltano and Bobrikoff, North Atlantic and Zimmerman, Denbigh and Pokomoko, Morning and Evening, Sanguine and Post Haste, Mangahane and Rangipo, Cynisca and Whisper, Rough and Settler, Corazon and Nadador, Bandeira and Bon Reve, Ventura and Maori King, Fair Rosamond and Kimbombi are names to conjure by, names that recall racing recollections that would fill a book with interesting matter. Hawke's Bay sportsmen and Hawke's Bay stewards have always been prominent in the ownership of good horses, and the breeding of them, and they and the people are as enthusiastic to-day over their equine celebrities as ever. From the meeting last week dates the dawn of a new era in racing in the province. That, at least, is the thought and wish of its friends.

It may not be generally known, but such is the case, that for every horse entered for some of the race meetings in England—and they include Sandown, Kempton, Hurst Park, Alexandra Park, Manchester, Haydock, Birmingham, Derby, Newbury and others, the owner pays a fee of 2s. 6d. to the clerk of the course, another 2s. 6d. for each starter to the clerk of the scales, and the stakeholder receives 1 per cent. of the stakes won by owners. In an article in the "Badminton Magazine," an owner rightly says that these are amongst the irritating and unfair charges that owners have to submit to. He goes on to say that his stud consists of from eight to twelve horses, and that he may make as many as 300 entries in a year, and that costs £37 10s. If he starts horses 100 times that means another £12 10s., and if his winnings amount to £1000 another £10, or £60 in all. This does not include the entrance fees, which are added to the stakes. This owner considers the tax thus levied upon owners very unfair, and is quite right; indeed, as he contends, it is ludicrous that owners, who provide the actors for the entertainment, should be fleeced by the wealthy racing companies in this and other ways. It is generally agreed that racing is more expensive in England than elsewhere. This is merely one of the sidelights.

In New Zealand the nomination and acceptance money for handicaps and

the forfeits in classic races all go to make up the stakes, but the owners, and especially those who race for the minor prizes, pay a big proportion of the prize money; indeed, so numerous are the nominations for most of these small prizes with many clubs that more money is contributed by the owners than is done anywhere else for similar prizes. As a matter of fact, in Auckland the owners have been finding a very big slice of the stake money indeed for years past. How long will they continue to do so? How long they will stand the present position is, of course, their concern, but there are a good many owners who have come to the conclusion that it costs very much more for the privilege of owning third-raters than it does to race first-class horses, the cost of nominating and accepting being much out of proportion to the value of the prizes in the first place, while the fees received are proportionally greater. The public now

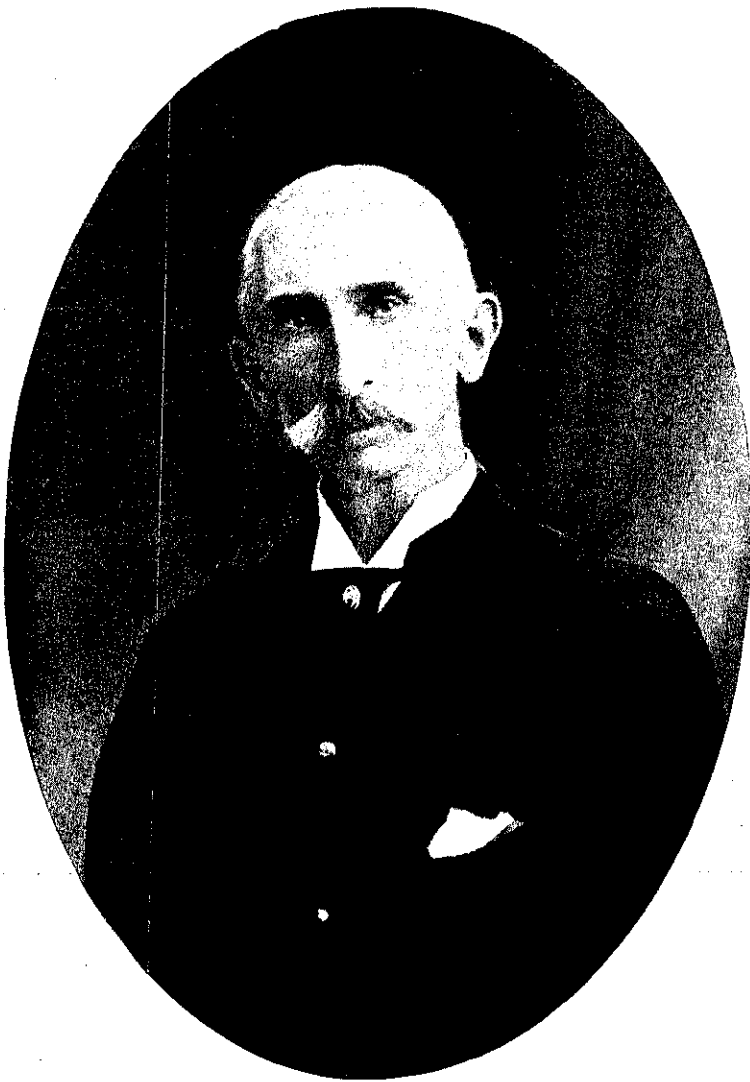
won a race of any description; 2nd, for horses that have never won a race exceeding £25 in value; 3rd, for horses that have never won a race exceeding £50 in value; 4th, for horses that have won over £50 and not exceeding £75; 5th, for horses that have won over £50 but not exceeding £100; 6th, for horses that have won over £75 but not exceeding £125; 7th for horses that have won over £100 but not exceeding £150; 8th, for horses that have won over £150, but not exceeding £200 in one stake. All prizes should be given by the clubs on the basis of seventy per cent. to the winner, twenty per cent. to the second horse, and ten per cent. to the third horse. Nomination fees should not exceed one-half per cent. of the advertised value of the stake, and acceptance not to exceed one and a-half per cent. thereof in races up to the value of 100sovs., and not to exceed one per cent. in races of over that value. It may be said that some

will need to make special conditions to suit themselves.

We have the definition of a "maiden," which in effect is a horse which at the time of starting has never won either an advertised flat race, hurdle race or steeplechase, but how many races have we for maiden performers? We have so-called maiden races, but nine times out of ten the clubs that provide these races put in a special proviso that these events are for horses that have never won a stipulated amount, thus getting away from the rule, the object being to secure a larger entry by letting in horses that have won small prizes as well as those that have not won at all. There has been a lot of talk about the so-called hack conditions. Such huge profits are made out of these hack races by most clubs that they have no wish to see them altered, and it suits them not to increase the stakes for these races, but is it fair or in the interests of owners? What owner would mind if he had a hack capable of winning a £200 or £250 race if he had to let it go out of the hack class? There are scores of horses that win themselves out of the hack races that are not good enough to go into the open company. Winning a number of small races, each bringing their aggregate winnings to £250, does not mean that they become of racehorse class, for many that have the luck to win themselves out of the hack ranks are not nearly so good as many of those that have failed to win the necessary amount.

A few practical racing men would frame conditions to regulate this hack racing business that would be much more acceptable to the bulk of owners. There are horses racing of no better class than were the hacks of between thirty and forty years ago. There are some much better, but those that figure at the top of the handicap lists for these races with hack conditions sometimes find it hard to win in the open company carrying light weights. Occasionally there is an odd one that comes out and distinguishes itself in better company, and the hack races serve their purpose for some horses as stepping-stones to something better. Very often owners of good ones send them into form for some of the better class races, and thus they do not always serve the purpose for which they were originally introduced. The hack racer of years ago was a bona fide hack, but the hack racer of to-day is rarely used for anything else but racing, and nine out of ten have just as good pedigrees as the best racehorses of the day, though they may not have had the same chances of distinguishing themselves, and in consequence take longer to develop to get the best of what they are capable from them. We hope to see some of our turf legislators take up this matter and bring down suggestions which will be the means of doing away with the present hack racer definitions and replacing them with something more befitting the situation, and it appears to us that classification is desirable and would greatly benefit racing in the Dominion.

Mr. James Leithead, whose portrait appears on this page, is probably one of the best-known sporting enthusiasts to be found in Hawke's Bay to-day. A native of Scotland, Mr. Leithead came to New Zealand twenty-five years ago, and during the whole of that period he has been associated with the welfare of "Orua Wharo," at Takapau, one of the best equipped and most extensive sheep stations to be found in the North Island. The racing instinct was developed early, and some years ago Mr. Leithead was induced to accept the position of vice-president of the Woodville District Jockey Club, which he retains at the present time. The Woodville Club is fortunate in having men of the right class to guide its destinies, and Mr. Leithead is one of the executive who takes the keenest interest in its welfare.



A PROMINENT HAWKE'S BAY SPORTSMAN—MR. JAMES LEITHEAD, Vice-President of the Woodville District Jockey Club.

speculate just as freely on the small races as they do on those of greater value, and the clubs keep on adding the profits of the small races to the value of the more important ones. The owners who provide the fields for these minor events are not receiving fair consideration, and another season should not be allowed to commence without an alteration in the conditions for clubs to observe for their so-called hack races. The classification of races should be fixed differently.

There are few totalisator clubs that cannot give £100 as a minimum stake, but there are some, and as provision should be made by clubs for horses of all classes there should be some general conditions laid down. No metropolitan club, or, say, first-grade club, should give a stake of less value than 200sovs. No second-grade club should give less than 150sovs.; no third less than 100sovs., no fourth less than 75sovs., and no fifth less than £50, at meetings where the totalisator is used. Non-totalisator clubs should not be restricted. Clubs should be permitted to select races calculated to suit their respective districts from those with the following conditions:—For horses, mares and geldings three years old and upwards: 1st, for horses that have never

clubs do not charge so much as the maximum provided for in the above conditions, though there is a rule which still exists which would permit of clubs charging as exorbitant a sum as 5 per cent. in nominations and acceptances if they so desire.

It is sometimes said that for convenience clubs make nominations for all their races 1sov., big and small. Owners would prefer that they should be charged in proportion to the value of the races they enter for—at least that is what many of the owners of second and third rate horses think. They cannot see why they should have to pay the same to nominate for a race worth £100 as the owner does who nominates for a race worth £1000. There are so many races to nominate for and so many horses of the same class entered for these races that they are very hard to win. What some owners who keep on racing their horses in these minor events, because they are not good enough for the more important ones, would like to see would be a classification of the horses somewhat on the lines already indicated. Clubs would then find that the nominations would be spread out better, and the possibility of having to deal with unwieldy fields would be reduced. Unless the Racing Conference takes a hand in this matter clubs