



On top of the news that Royal Bucks had won the Lincolnshire Handicap followed later the information that the City and Suburban Handicap had fallen to the same horse, son of imported Buckwheat, who has had quite a number of representatives in England. Mr. Bob Sievier, who races and trains him, has had many experiences as an owner and trainer, and he has occasion to remember the first time one of his horses won that race. It was the famous Sceptre, for which he gave the highest price ever paid for a yearling, viz., 10,000 guineas. That peerless lady of her time paid for herself in stakes, as she won her cost several times, and then left more than enough to pay training, entrance and general expenses, and was sold for 35,000 guineas. It was thought at the time that it was due to preparing the filly during the winter months and attempting to secure an early stake—which she won—that Sceptre got beaten in the Derby, for which her owner had backed her heavily and for which she had been made a very pronounced favourite. How time flies! That is 17 years ago, and some of those with good memories will recall what a sensation there was over the filly's defeat, not only in her defeat, but in her failure to even get a place. Fourth was the best she could do. It was hard enough to get beaten and lose more than would have kept many a careful trainer for years in one fell swoop as it were. The critics sympathised with her owner, but blamed him for training her himself. Bob Sievier was given to plunging, and he was playing back to the ring what he had won from them with a bit added of the money Sceptre had previously earned. To be told that his training methods were not up to date—otherwise of the novice order—was a sore point. Still, it can be said that though he had been very successful with her he did not understand then all the fine points of the trainers' art. With the knowledge gained since, the versatile Robert would certainly like to have another Sceptre through his hands, though it will probably be some time before the opportunity returns for an owner to be able to win anything like the sums of money that could have been got from the pencilers in Sceptre's year, before and since, and he might never take such a risk again if it did. Robert Standish Sievier became more popular than ever during the war period in England, and his successes this season would be appreciated by many admiring friends, who know how well he played the game when the big world battle was on and the part he played when the Boer War was causing grave concern.

The Manawatu Racing Club's meeting, which was begun on Wednesday and concluded on Thursday, had something of more than ordinary interest for Aucklanders and those who follow form closely. The fact that a few horses were racing which claim engagements at the Great Northern meeting of the Auckland Racing Club, and that more were in evidence which are also entered for the Egmont and Wanganui meetings gave it additional interest, apart from what would have been taken in it for other reasons. Now we have practically arrived at the jumping season, though the ground has not been favourable for as much schooling work as some owners would like to have given their horses, chief interest is centred in the Century Hurdle Race and Wanganui Steeplechase and the Great Northern Hurdles and Great Northern Steeplechase, which follow, and in the Egmont meeting, which precedes both. They come in quick succession, the Egmont gathering on Wednesday and Thursday, the 14th and 15th, and Wanganui on the 22nd and 24th.

The weights for the events of the first day of the Egmont Racing Club's meeting appeared on Friday, and the acceptances were taken on Saturday night, by which time those intended to compete were either there or en route for Hawera, the chief town between New Plymouth and Wanganui. Hawera is a growing centre, sometimes playfully referred

to as "the city of the plains." For some years when there were ardent sportsmen keenly interested in jumping horses in the district at the head of affairs, steeplechases were regularly held there. The mistake was at first made of erecting fences unreasonably big or at least too formidable for horses commencing the so-called illegitimate game—why so called it is hard to understand, for it is a line of racing that requires pluck skill and judgment on the part of horsemen, and gameness, cleverness and durability in their mounts. The result was that some of the contests proved disappointing, and gradually flat races took the places of the discarded jumping events. We hope that the return to the old order of things will be signalled with success, though with the sting in the ground for so long it would seem that a fresh start is being made with the odds against the jumping events, of which there are five out of 14.

The money invested on the totalisators on the opening day of the Manawatu Racing Club's autumn meeting amounted to £36,095, as against £45,913 on the first day last year, and on the second day the figures ran out at £38,144, compared with £45,397 on the second day of the 1918 autumn gathering. The total for the two days was then £91,310, and for this week £74,239, thus revealing the large falling off of £17,071. This



Prominent officials and sportsmen photographed at the Avondale Jockey Club's meeting.—From left: Messrs. Jos. Raynes, A. Davis, M. Foley (President), J. C. Gleeson, Captain Vercoe, Messrs. H. H. Hayr (secretary) and G. Baildon).

would be alarming from a club point of view were it not that last year there were special reasons for the abnormal figures. The meeting then was a patriotic one, and the owners from all round were doing what they could to make it as attractive as possible. It was well boomed in every way, and the great draw was the expected meetings of Desert Gold and Biplane, which did not eventuate. This year there was no boom on, though the material was there to enthruse over. Desert Gold, by reason of repeated defeats throughout the season by crack racehorses of her own class, in Australia and New Zealand, had ceased to be so much talked of by her admirers, though, in our opinion, quite as good a mare at six years old as ever she was. Her narrow-margin defeats in weight-for-age contests in Australia, run in record times, and her ability to turn the tables on those that had beaten her, only to be narrowly defeated by some good one she had not previously met, was very convincing that she was still all there. On her return to New Zealand, Desert Gold met Gloaming, who had more than held his own in Australia with horses that had defeated her. Gloaming proved his superiority over the mare by carrying his penalties over weight for age and beating her at Egmont at six furlongs and also at a mile in record

time for the course, with the luck against her in the six-furlong race through the falling of Croesus, and with the luck more decidedly against Gloaming at New Plymouth, where he met with interference when Desert Gold won the Taranaki Stakes.

Last week we expressed ourselves on the prospective meeting of Desert Gold and Sasanof in the Awapuni Gold Cup: "Will she and Sasanof meet in the Awapuni Gold Cup? Before these notes have circulated far we shall know, and we believe she will be up against as stiff a proposition at weight for age as ever she has had, quite as formidable a one as was set her in the Craven Plate at Randwick in the spring. The difference, however, is that she will only have one crack to tackle instead of several." Then again, in analysing the form of Sasanof in the Thompson Handicap and Desert Gold in the A.R.C. Easter, taking Spanner as our gauge, we said: "There should be nothing between Desert Gold and Sasanof at a mile. Will there be in the Awapuni Gold Cup at a mile and a-quarter? We prefer Sasanof in the belief that he will be the fitter of the pair, because of the racing he has done and because we do not think that Desert Gold has met a better of his age and possibly not one so good. There are others in the race, and we hope the day will be fine and the presence of two such as Sasanof

a few others and of Biplane and Gloaming, both Australian-breds, trained in New Zealand and on occasions well tested by New Zealand-bred ones, has led to a modification of these ideas. Both the last-named, though the best of their ages when in Australia, met with defeats in New Zealand, which, though excusable, showed that even the best are sometimes caught a bit below their form or that some little mishap at the start or during the running may make the difference between success and failure.

In the above connection, the two-year-old form at Trentham exemplified this. The running in the Manawatu Sires' Produce Stakes also did not as truly represent the merits of some of the competitors as it would have done on a straight away course, or on one less circumscribed. Affectation got a bad run and so did Warplane, the winner, who had the luck to get clear and to then show his superiority over the best at the weights, and to show the improvement we anticipated. He has been raced judiciously without being overtaxed, and Amythas, who started favourite, may have been just a bit wanting after the efforts he had to put forth at Trentham. A rather longer interval would have suited him perhaps. It was the record he put up at Trentham probably that caused him to go out favourite over

and Desert Gold will compensate for last year's disappointment." Our estimate worked out to a nicety, the day was fine, the pair met, the course record was broken, an Australasian record was almost equalled and Sasanof won by half a length. What more could admirers of good horses wish for unless for sentimental reasons to have seen the half length the other way and Desert Gold's number hoisted for the fourth time in connection with the race in which she was never called upon to so exert herself before?

It is still our opinion that Sasanof and Desert Gold are the best of their respective ages and sexes in Australasia and our one regret and that of good sportsmen is that Gloaming, the crack gelding three-year-old and the crack of his age in Australasia, was not on hand tackling the pair and doing his bit of turf history making. Mention of the name of Gloaming reminds us that his owner stated last week that the injury met with by the Welkin gelding at the barrier at Trentham was not likely to prove serious. It is ever pleasing to write about good horses. Only three years ago Australian writers were beginning to class New Zealand's best as well below the standard to which they properly belonged, but the presence of Kilbooy, Sasanof, Desert Gold and

Warplane (coupled with Ermine) and Affectation. After Desert Gold, with a 3lb. penalty, had come out and defeated her stable mate (Lucid) in the Manawatu Stakes, in which he had no more than his weight for age and in which Warplane was third, carrying the maximum penalty of 10lb., it was stated that Desert Gold had not been trained for the Awapuni Cup. This is hardly acceptable information, though the probability is that she wanted racing, which she did not get. It would appear that Warplane was interfered with in the Stakes, and as Affectation was not a runner and also met with trouble the first day, Desert Gold was somewhat in luck. She was only giving 13lb. to Warplane, who was receiving 31lb. from Gloaming in the North Island Challenge Stakes, when the latter was caught in the barrier and was favourite. It will be thus seen what a much easier task Desert Gold was taking on. That she was still equal to winning in brilliant fashion, getting within a fraction of a second of her own previous record at three years old, was pleasing to her numerous admirers, and she received a great reception. Who will say that she cannot get over the ground as fast as ever?

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