

HUNTO — B.G. — AGED — HUNTING SONG, DODO—HURDLER—REACHED OVER THE FENCE AND BIT ME.

No friendly nip either; a bite with ears laid low, stamp of a hoof, rat-trap snap of teeth. Maybe a good sign for the summer season, an indication that winning the Great Northern Hurdles two years running was the idea. As a pointer to form the bite might be worth remembering; as a welcome to Thames it, to say the least, lacked warmth. I looked at my hand and wondered where I had heard Thames was a friendly place. Hunto went back to his grass. A scow on the river, smoke from a chimney, mist over the high hills, the roads long and white, pubs and churches, houses and shops looking old, straggling. Thames, early morning. No sign of life.

So in the main street of Thames you can be bitten by a champion thoroughbred. But there is more to do than that. You can give an order for a railway engine, as many as you like, you can let a contract for a lighthouse as high as you wish. If you don't mind the wet you can go down a gold-mine at any time of day or night; if the work appeals you can take a course at the School of Mines. If it's fishing, there's fishing. The scenery round the coast, over the hills, up the river. Or you can get lost in the history of this town, its wild tough beginnings, its progress and development. Pubs—there are thirteen of them. Churches—there are thirteen of them, too. In Thames there are a hundred things to do. But don't get any wrong ideas: there are men in blue there too: they'll cancel your driving license, fine you £25 as quick in Thames as anywhere. Thames is no larger than a hundred other towns in New Zealand, in many ways it is no different. But it has a lot more besides.

"The directors report that contact has been made with the main reef at the New No. 6 level at approximately 100 ft. below the lowest previous workings . . . According to the company's geologist the reef and country at the new low level are favourable to re-depositions of free gold with secondary enrichments likely to a further depth of 400 ft. It is expected that base metals will provide



an important supplementary source of revenue . . ."—Newspaper report of Sylvia Mines Consolidated, Ltd. (Thames). And not a newspaper report of 1874, even 1924, but 1944. Gold is where you find it. Thames is one of the places. You're not there long before you hear tales of gold, stories more brightly colourful than the metal. Tons of stories for tons of gold. They're still looking for, still finding, gold. But in these days of 1944 they're finding it in ounces, deep, wetly down into the earth. A handful of men. The one mine. Not much more than fifty years ago they were finding it by the ton. Scores of mines. Thousands of miners. Hundreds of thousands of pounds, millions.

It's a different Thames now, but gold made its beginnings, madly swung it to its feet, shoved, pushed, furiously rushed it on its way. At times, changing times, through depression and setback, knocked, jolted, breathless, it has looked back sadly for days past, hopefully for those to come. But it has never stood still for long. Soon hurrying, calmer, slower, more carefully on its way. Thames doesn't depend on the yellow value of that metal for its life these days. Security, the ways and means of living