

CURRENT TOPICS

THE GAMING COMMISSION'S REPORT

The strange labyrinth traversed during several months of last year in the search for something approaching the truth concerning the ways of gamblers and those who make a living by catering for their perverted needs, has yielded material for a report commendable for the promptitude of its appearance, for the thoroughness of its scope, and for the evident recognition of certain of the more flagrant and common breaches of the present Gaming Laws. The effort to formulate some plan for the regulation of this great national evil brings home to the social worker the terrible hold on the community exercised by horse racing and kindred "sports," in a way that startles and shocks. The calm acceptance of conditions fraught with danger to the whole national character and standing, is a feature causing deep concern. That betting is to be regarded "as a widespread, deeply-rooted and widely approbated propensity," beyond the power of the law to overcome, but capable of regulation in the public interest, seems to be a submission to entrenched evil. The statement regarding the recommendations on bookmakers' activities is worth consideration in this connection: "It would be a dangerous thing in any event to give any legal character to the activities of men or a body of men who for years have persisted in earning their livelihood in defiance of the law and at the risk of often threatened and sometimes imposed imprisonment. We condemn the suggestion that the State should surrender to the difficulty of suppressing illegal bookmaking and embark upon a policy of appeasement by licensing it." This is good advice. It could be equally applied to certain long-suffered illegalities practised in the liquor traffic. But we are told that these are the results of efforts to restrain and regulate the traffic. Well, well!

THE POLIOMYELITIS EPIDEMIC

This major calamity to Dominion-wide interests and plans for the summer, in addition to the heartbreaking sorrow and suffering experienced by its victims and their relatives, brings us face to face with a problem which seems little nearer its solution than in 1916, when the first visitation of the epidemic form of the disease was experienced here. Though a great deal of research has been carried out, the conquest of "Infantile" has not yet eventuated. We hope and pray for the speedy ending of the present epidemic. To those who have suffered in any measure, we offer our sincere sympathy.

MINISTER FOR HEALTH

We have reason to congratulate the Minister for Health, Miss Mabel Howard, on her forthright and sen-

sible handling of certain matters coming within her sphere of activity. Foremost among these is her work in connection with Mental Hospitals. By personal investigation, Miss Howard realised the need for some alterations in long-established custom, and without delay, saw to it that these were made. Her efforts to abolish the "stigma" attached to the idea of mental illness are worthy of everyone's gratitude. Women's organisations have plodded for years in the attempt to have the handling of foodstuffs carried out with the maximum of cleanliness and efficiency, and the thought that their efforts have some chance of effectiveness through one of their own sex in the position held by Miss Howard, is an additional cause for satisfaction that the Government was sufficiently enlightened and progressive to place a woman in charge of the Portfolio of Public Health.

HOLIDAY DRINKING

At a provincial seaside resort having a normal population of a little over a thousand inhabitants, it was stated in the local newspaper that in ten days of the holiday period £15,000 was spent in beer. "This would mean," the paper said, "that £1,500 was spent each of those ten days." 15,000 to 20,000 dozen bottles were to be collected as the result of the days of holiday. Comment is needless.

OTAGO CENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS

The whole Dominion is interested and sympathetic in the happy festival year of Otago. The story of the first foundation of the province is one to stir the blood of all readers. A solid structure of character and achievement has resulted from those early beginnings. The contribution to the religious and cultural life of New Zealand made by Otago, and especially of course by Dunedin, has been worthy of those great souls who in days long gone by, stood for freedom and the right to worship in their own community church; and whose sons were among those who began to build "Jerusalem" in this green and pleasant land. We join with all who send good wishes to Otago.

"BEERCOTT" PROFITABLE

Since the beer boycott—or the "beercott," as it is now known—was imposed on the West Coast, it has had six important results. Gardens now receive more attention; houses are being painted and repaired; absenteeism at the mines has almost disappeared; earnings have increased; coal production has never been higher; and everyone agrees there is a better social and domestic atmosphere prevailing than there was before. These points are made in an official statement issued by the Grey Valley Miners' Central Committee.—(Nelson "Evening Mail," December 11th.)

IN LOVING MEMORY

Mrs. Davidson and Miss R. Day, Oamaru Union

The Oamaru Union has recently lost by death two faithful and valued members, Mrs. Davidson and Miss R. Day. Both ladies attended the meetings while health permitted, and were ever ready to help in the active work of the Union. Mrs. Davidson assisted the Social Convener, and was a pleasant and friendly hostess.

Miss R. Day filled many roles successfully; and her bright and ready response to the call for help was much appreciated by the office-bearers. They have entered into their rest, and left a pleasant memory with those who were associated with them in Temperance work.

Mrs. Nicholson, Tauranga Union

In the passing of Mrs. Nicholson, the Tauranga Union has experienced a very real loss. Although her connection with this Union was only of four years' duration, she had endeared herself to all members by her keen interest and practical help in the work. Frail health made her presence all the more valued because of the effort involved in coming out. Mrs. Nicholson had been a member of the Dannevirke Union for about twenty years. Born in London, she was brought as a young child to New Zealand, marrying Mr. Tom Nicholson of Dannevirke. After his death she took up residence in Tauranga to be near relatives. Her death was very sudden. The interment took place at Dannevirke, when members of that Union attended. Her bright, keen interest in everything will be greatly missed.

Mrs. Phoebe Bradley, Dargaville Union

One of our beloved members has passed into the presence of the King of kings. Mrs. Phoebe Bradley, who became a member at the inception of the Dargaville Union in 1922. She has been a faithful and conscientious supporter of the Temperance Cause right through, until declining health and age bade her sit still. She was for eleven years "White Ribbon" agent. She had been presented with the twenty years' Service Badge when members met at her home for the occasion, as she was unable to attend meetings. In her thanks and remarks, she told us of the early days when she canvassed for subscribers to the "White Ribbon" and delivered temperance literature from door to door. We shall miss her; and we pray that "grace may be given us to follow in her train." The W.C.T.U. service was conducted at the graveside by Mrs. Bickers of Te Kopuru.

Mrs. Whiteman, Upper Hutt

One of the oldest and best-loved members of the Upper Hutt Union passed to Higher Service in her 88th year, on December 23rd. Three members attended the interment at St. John's Churchyard, Trentham, on December 26th, at which a very large number had gathered to show their