

OCCASIONAL NOTES.

[BY "MERCURIUS II."]

I have no idea whether the town and district is much concerned by the Ministry of Health's new drive against rent profiteers. I doubt not, however, that the Council have their eyes open and will deal with any offenders they see as the Health Ministry directs.

I saw a funny thing on Saturday morning, which I understand is quite usual where I stay. In through the front door, down the passage, across the living room and out into the garden marched two dustmen, to return by the same route with a full dustbin which they brought back empty by the same route again. This notwithstanding a back entrance to and a road behind where I lodged!

Friends of Mr John W. Stokoe, Darlington, formerly head master of Eggleston C.E. School, will be glad to learn that his son, William Geoffrey, a native of Teesdale, at the recent Higher Certificate examination of Durham University, gained distinction in Pure and Applied Mathematics, distinction in Physics, and special credit in Chemistry, and has been awarded by the Board of Education a State Bursary of £175 a year in Science, Radio Physics, at Cambridge University, and the Bellasis Exhibition of £50 a year by the Darlington Education Committee. Mr J. W. Stokoe is head master of St. John's C.E. School, Darlington.

The other Sunday afternoon I cycled out a bit to make a call, and through losing my way on the outward journey it was well after black-out time (really almost quite dark) when I was pedalling homeward along an extraordinarily muddy road. And yet (to me they were cheering because I was wanting my tea!) away across the fields I saw, shining brightly and apparently unscattered, two lights that must have been visible for miles around. . . . from a real Barnard Castle landmark. "No names, no packdrill!" It may only have been through inadvertence; I have not been back to see. From writing of lights is no far cry to writing of no lights. Some cyclists who are riding about after dark with no rear lights will have only themselves to blame if they meet trouble, either from the hand of the law or from something far heavier that will deal them a K.O. On the Sunday evening I have referred to one of them rode part of the way with me and we overtook another in the town. And I do not think they are the only ones taking risks, for the bus-drivers, whose job at night I do not envy, are grumbling.

That Cr E. Watson has been chosen to lead the drive for metal and old rubber scrap does not surprise me. I rather expected his mirth-provoking enthusiasm at the inaugural meeting would let him in for it. The right man for the job, or I am mistaken, and that not because he is Committee Chairman of that section of the Council's activities which is most skilled in gathering up things people don't want. No! But because of his infectious enthusiasm for anything he sets his mind to. The inaugural meeting cannot have been over more than an hour before he had the W.V.S. roped in and pledged to do their very utmost not only in canvassing but in all other directions as well to make scrap metal week a success. Good going! In order to obtain this invaluable support in the campaign, Cr Watson had to approach two ladies, Mrs T. Boardman and Mrs White. Although I feel sure they did not need much persuasion, Cr. Watson was not taking any risks. Crs. Singer and Boxall accompanied him! The drive, I see, is to be formally set going this (Wednesday) morning at 11.30. "May it, from day to day, gather such momentum that, by the time it is over, Barnard Castle and District's effort for munitions will rank amongst the County's best. The organisers are not letting grass grow beneath their feet anyway. The loud-speaker van was around on Monday; shopkeepers are showing the campaign posters with scrap they themselves propose to give; and a grand BHP is being given to things by Sgt. Carradice's magnificent model battleship in Mr Wood's shop window, and by a fascinating film at the cinemas.

During the vacancy of the living, the morning and afternoon services at Gainford Parish Church for the past few Sundays have been conducted by the Rev. J. A. Sisson, Rector of Winston, and the services at Piercebridge Church by the Rev. A. H. Nicholson formerly Vicar of Acklington, Northumberland.

Another amenity for troops, in the form of a Catholic Club, will soon be an accomplished fact. Preparation of the premises acquired for the purpose is so far advanced that it is hoped to open the Club on Christmas Eve. The men themselves are doing much of the interior decoration in their spare time, and even the Chaplain, the Rev. B. Goode, is lending a hand with a paint brush.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE TEESDALE MERCURY.]

Sir.—The sum of £15 was raised by a whist drive and dance organised by the Middleton-in-Teesdale Local Lads' Welfare Committee on Wednesday, December 2nd, to raise funds for the Christmas dinner of the Unit stationed there.

As Officer Commanding the local Unit I should like to take advantage of your columns to express the very great thanks of the whole Unit for the gifts of prizes, the hard work of many helpers, and the public support that combined to make the show such a success.—Yours, etc.,

(Signed) O.C.

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OBITUARY.

FUNERAL OF MR GEORGE THOMPSON.

The Horsemarket was a quiet, sad-looking place on Thursday afternoon when the funeral cortege of the late Mr George Thompson departed from the "Bay Horse" Hotel, where he was born, and where, to customers who long since had grown to regard him as a friend, he had been "mine host" for so many years that his license must have been one of the longest held in the town. Rain was falling heavily; and it was significant of the esteem in which Mr Thompson had been held that, despite it, a large party preceded the hearse on foot all the way to Barnard Castle cemetery, where the Vicar of the Parish Church, the Rev. B. Selwyn Smith, M.A., was waiting to conduct the burial service. In addition to attending the funeral as his personal friends, members of the local branch of the Licensed Victuallers' Association were present as such to pay homage to one who had been prominent in all their activities, for many years as their hon. secretary.

The family mourners, deeply moved by the widespread sympathy shown, were: Miss Dorothy Thompson, daughter; Mr and Mrs Wright and Mr and Mrs B. Kirby (Billingham), sisters and brothers-in-law; also cousins, nephews, nieces, and others, including Mr and Mrs J. Thompson (Northallerton), Mrs Davis, Mrs Duffy, and Miss F. Thompson (Staindrop), Miss Alice Riley, Mrs Pugh (Norton), Mr and Mrs Dobbie, Mrs Gillingham (Lartington), and Mrs Nugent (Middlesbrough).

Members of the local Licensed Victuallers' Association present were: Mr J. Dumble, delegate, No. 1 District, who also represented Major Fryers, Secretary, Northumberland and Durham branch of the National Trades Defence Association; Messrs R. Neasham, F. Welford, G. Bird, G. O. Walker, F. Dawson, W. Kidd, C. F. Woodhams, J. B. Walker, F. Lowe, J. Wilkinson, S. Turner, H. Lowson, L. B. Marshall, P. Beadel, J. Bell, J. Gateby, C. Lewis, and G. A. Carter.

Other friends in attendance were: Mr R. Peden (who also represented Cr. W. Ascough), Mrs C. F. Woodhams, Mrs Dobbie, Mrs Kidd and Mrs F. Lowe, Crs. E. C. Robinson and E. W. Boxall, Messrs R. Chatt, F. Deacon, G. A. Barker, G. T. Guy, A. Brown, C. Nevison, V. Heslop (Ovington), T. Walker, C. W. Evans, H. Burdon, T. Thubron, A. Newsome (Darlington), W. H. Coates, T. Hamilton, I. Baper, I. Baker, and R. Bayles (Sunderland); also Leading Firemen P. Jackson and T. Mitchell, Messrs T. Wilson, T. Milner, W. Walton and A. Lowson acted as bearers, whilst Mr F. J. Robinson, who was responsible for the funeral arrangements, was also present personally to pay his last respects.

Rain was still falling when the coffin, led by the Rev. B. Selwyn Smith, was borne in procession from the cemetery chapel to the grave; and, as it was lowered to its resting place beside that of Mrs Thompson, who died thirteen years ago, all hearts went out in sympathy to the young woman who, now, has been left alone to carry on, at the "Bay Horse" Hotel, the traditions her father so ably built up.

Among the beautiful floral tributes were wreaths from Dorothy, daughter; Winnie, Mick and Connie; nephews and nieces, Wilfred, Arthur, Cecily and Florence; Hilda; Mr and Mrs A. Newsome and family; Mr and Mrs Bird; Dora King; "George's Friends at the Bar," and the local branch of the Licensed Victuallers' Association.

GEORGE THOMPSON,
BY AN OLD FRIEND.

By the death of George Thompson, Barnard Castle has lost a true sportsman and a worthy citizen. Had he been minded to, he also could have laid claim to being an ideal landlord, just as his father was when proprietor of the "Bay Horse" Hotel before him. It was from his father that he inherited his keen interest in sport. Mr Thompson senior's great fancy was for flat racing, and during the building of the Bowes Museum he often promoted races for the workmen as well as handicaps for youths. At that time people had few amusements; even football was in its infancy. It was at Barnard Castle that George Thompson, the youngest of four brothers, was initiated into athletics by his father, and as he grew older and stronger he began to come to the front in amateur circles. George Thompson won many flat race prizes at varying distances. His proudest recollection was of winning first prize, a gold watch, in a quarter-mile handicap at Whitburn sports, beating some of the leading athletes of the day. It was a fine achievement, for Whitburn was considered a class meeting. Another triumph for him was his victory in a one-mile race at Guisborough over, amongst other prominent runners, George Butterfield, who was destined to become the one-mile amateur champion of

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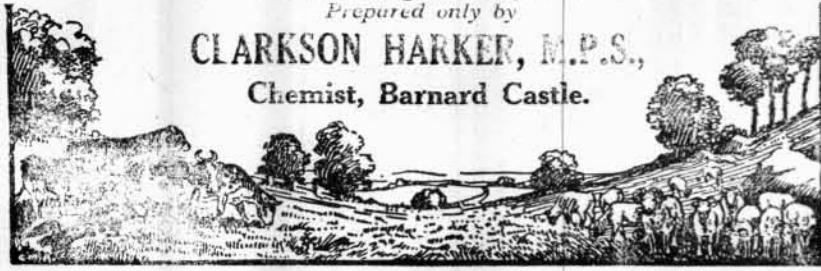
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England. George Thompson purchased the "Bay Horse" Hotel when his father's estate was put on the market. Soon afterwards he married Miss Ada Ramsden, and his wife ably assisted him in carrying on the "Bay Horse" in the same manner as his father had done. George was one of Barnard Castle Football Club's staunchest supporters at a time when it was turning out some stirring players. Among these were Jim Welford, Bob Chatt, Albert Evans, and Fred Wood, all of whom assisted Aston Villa; also J. Grievson, who attained international honours and eventually settled in South Africa. Mr Thompson, whose house was their headquarters, was on the club committee when they won the championship of Darlington and District League. A speedy runner himself, it seemed natural for him to turn in time to other sports engaged in by fast runners. He became a keen greyhound coursing fan and at one time and another owned some splendid dogs. This is little to be wondered at because, well advised by his friends, Messrs Bell-Irving and Harry Bell, he invariably bought from the best blood. Possibly the best dog he ever owned was "Rokely Lad," although he had another good one in "Rocketeer." The former once won or divided three stakes in succession, whilst the latter, adept in hurdle racing, often had its long tail in front on the flat. In quest of his favourite sport, Mr Thompson often visited Powderhall, Newcastle, Pontypridd, Manchester, and other places, and was also no stranger at horse-race meetings in the northern circuit.

His personality was such that he readily gained friends everywhere he went, and although he performed his good deeds quietly there are many who can testify to his kindness to those less fortunate than himself. Although taking no very active interest in politics, Mr Thompson was always an ardent Unionist.—W.A.



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Staindrop Police Court
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