

Selling liquor without a license is a statutory offence, and not a crime, and therefore not of supreme importance from a police point of view. To deal with all cases of sly-grog selling, and enforce the strict observance of the licensing-laws in the manner desired by some who have given evidence would, until the sentiment of the community undergoes a considerable change, require the almost entire attention of a Police Force larger than that which now exists in the colony.

No facts have come before us which we consider justify condemnation of the Police Department in connection with its action in regard to the liquor-laws. Individual constables have on occasions neglected their duty, but in all cases brought under our notice punishment in some form has followed.

Gambling.

Gambling, in the form of betting on horse-races, is very prevalent in the colony, the favourite mode here being on the licensed totalisator, which is legalised, while betting totalisator-odds with unlicensed persons (known as "tote" betting) is illegal, as also is betting with minors. The police have been censured for negligence in respect of these illegal forms of betting. We find police action in the present state of the law is surrounded with difficulties, and submit the following as some of them :

It is illegal for a man to occupy a place for the purpose of making ordinary bets, but he may move about and make as many bets as he pleases. He may not occupy an office for the purpose of betting with persons "resorting thereto," but he may have a dozen offices if he arranges his bets by correspondence, telephone, telegraph, or by moving about amongst the people in the streets or elsewhere. If a warrant be obtained, and the office of a "tote" bettor raided, his accounts may not show that he has been practising "tote" betting, as they are often kept in such a way that the entries are understood only by the owner. Shops are kept ostensibly for a lawful trade or purpose where secret "tote" betting is carried on. Bookmakers openly ply their vocation in the main streets of the large towns of the colony, and there is no power to prevent them unless they obstruct the traffic.

These facts present some of the difficulties in the way of the police securing convictions for breaches of the law against gambling, but many cases have been tried in our Courts and a number of convictions obtained, returns of which will be found in the Appendix. Bookmakers have, as a rule, command of money, and usually get good legal assistance, and the niceties of the law as to betting are taken full advantage of.

We are of opinion that the laws relating to gaming require amendment. If it is not desired to make betting wholly illegal, then the practice of betting as an occupation, or in connection with any other business, should be made unlawful.

With a view to diminish the nuisance of street-betting, we think that section 4 of "The Police Offences Act, 1884," should be amended by the addition of the following new subsection : "Any two or more persons assembled together in any part of a street for the purpose of betting shall be deemed to be obstructing the street, and be liable to a penalty of not exceeding £10 or imprisonment not exceeding three months with hard labour"; or, as an alternative, so as to make any person who shall be found frequenting any public place for the purpose of betting liable to the above penalty.

Brothels.

The law as to brothels appears to be satisfactorily enforced. A considerable amount of prostitution undoubtedly exists, but where it has become a nuisance by the establishment of brothels the police have taken action to suppress it. As those who can give evidence of the acts of prostitution necessary to constitute a brothel are, for obvious reasons, reluctant to do so, the police have to rely on indirect testimony, and experience difficulty in obtaining convictions; but many prosecutions have been instituted with a considerable amount of success and advantage to the community. Returns on this subject will be found in the Appendix. Although there is reason for believing that houses of that class remain, there is no ground for suggesting they are carried on with the connivance of the police, or that the police are indifferent or negligent in dealing with them.

In Auckland the police appear to be under a special difficulty in obtaining convictions, owing to the existence of a by-law of the City Council which makes every inmate of a brothel liable to punishment, and unwilling witnesses eagerly take shelter behind it and