

property, 89; manslaughter, 5; murder, 8; obstructing railway lines, 10; obstructing thoroughfares, 11; receiving stolen property, 26; shooting with intent, 4; sly grog-selling, 92; theft undescribed, 180; theft from dwellings, 28; trespass, 119. Other offences have decreased as follows: Abusive and threatening language, 12; arson, 11; bankruptcy offences, 7; concealment of birth, 4; cruelty to animals, 25; deserting and failing to provide for wives and children, 250; disorderly and riotous conduct, 68; embezzlement, 11; forgery and uttering, 12; gaming offences, 8; illegally on premises, 15; indecent exposure and behaviour, 8; keeping disorderly houses and brothels, 24; neglected and criminal children, 50; rape, 10; rape—attempted, 7; smuggling, 11; theft of cattle and horses, 50; theft of sheep, 46; theft from the person, 29; vagrancy, 41.

#### REMARKS ON CRIMINAL STATISTICS.

The most serious increases of offences against property have been burglary and breaking into shops and dwellings, 49; malicious injury to property, 89; theft undescribed, 180; and theft from dwellings, 28. The rise or fall in the number of offences against property are generally accepted as a fair criterion of the inefficiency or efficiency respectively of a Police Force, the primary duty of which is to prevent crime; and as offences against property are as a general rule admitted to be preventable crimes, it necessarily follows that so long as these preventable crimes increase the Police Force cannot be considered efficient.

The principal increase in serious offences against the person have been: Abortion, 4; carnally knowing girls, 13; cutting and wounding, 5; manslaughter, 5; and murder, 8: total increase, 35. The total number of these offences reported during the year was 51, and the total number of persons apprehended or summoned for those offences was 49. It will therefore be seen that the Police have been able to cope fairly well with this class of offences.

I find from reference to previous returns that there has been an annual increase in the number of offences reported since the year 1891, the highest being 663 for the year 1896. In my opinion the principal causes for the inefficiency of the Force, disclosed by these annual increases in crime are fourfold, namely—(1) Numerical weakness; (2) a want of proper training of men on being taken into the Force; (3) a lack of subsequent supervision; and (4) incapacity of many members of the Force owing to advanced age or bodily infirmity.

Towards remedying above, I suggest (1) an immediate augmentation of fifty men; (2) the establishment of a training depot at which recruits should be kept for training at least three months; (3) the appointment of four sub-inspectors to have general supervision over the four populous centres, thus leaving the Inspectors in charge of those districts greater liberty to supervise their districts; and (4) the establishment of a pension system.

#### DRUNKENNESS.

The total number of persons proceeded against for drunkenness throughout the colony during the year was 5,604, being an increase of 199 on the figures of the preceding year, and although this is not so large an increase as that for 1896, which was 369, still it is a matter for regret.

#### SLY-GROG SELLING.

There were 146 persons proceeded against for this offence during the year, an increase of ninety-two on the figures of the preceding year. Although this may show an increased activity on the part of the police, I fear it cannot be accepted as an indication that the evil is being stamped out. The prosecutions serve to make the dealers more wary, and now it is only in rare instances that they can be induced to sell to persons who are unknown to them, it therefore follows that after each prosecution the police experience greater difficulty in getting the necessary evidence to justify proceedings being taken; and it is only by the adoption of subterfuge, or the promise of a money reward to persons to become informers, both of which practices should only be resorted to in extreme cases, that in the great majority of instances can any evidence whatever be obtained. No doubt if liquor was allowed to be sold under license in the districts where sly-grog selling is most prevalent the traffic could be more easily regulated by the police, but this question of license *versus* non-license is one more of policy than of police procedure.

#### SUNDAY AND AFTER-HOUR TRADING.

That there is a great deal of illegal Sunday and after-hour trading on the part of many publicans throughout the colony cannot be denied, and so long as the law remains as it is this cannot be checked to any appreciable extent, even if the whole Police Force of the colony were engaged on this particular duty. It is well understood by the unscrupulous licensees in many parts of the colony that, in the event of proceedings being taken against them, all that is necessary to break down the evidence of the witnesses for the prosecution is to bring forward an equal number of persons to swear to the contrary, and, although it is palpable to every one that in most cases the evidence of the persons so called is entirely unreliable, still, as it is a case of one person's oath against another's, the prosecution usually fails. As an instance of the difficulty the police experience in procuring convictions, I will quote a recent case:—

On a certain Sunday evening a police constable visited an hotel, and found in front of the bar in company with the licensee persons who were neither *bona fide* travellers nor lodgers. On the bar near them were empty wine-glasses, corresponding in number to the persons present, and an empty wine-bottle. The licensee, in reply to the constable, stated he had been shouting champagne for the others, and later on he repeated this statement in the presence of two police officers. The licensee was summoned, and when the case came on for hearing he, in giving evidence for the defence, swore that the wine contained in the bottle seen on the bar on the Sunday