

either Auckland or Christchurch, and nearly four times as many as in Dunedin, still the convictions obtained were only one in excess of the number in each of the other three cities. The foregoing figures will, I think, be sufficient to show the difficulty the police experience in dealing with Sunday-trading, especially in Wellington, where the publicans run so little risk of conviction:

The total number of informations laid against publicans throughout the colony during the year was 301, resulting in 121 convictions, and although Sunday-trading is not nearly so prevalent as it was it is still resorted to by many unscrupulous publicans who have but little stake in the houses they conduct. The police will never be able to successfully cope with this class of offence until the law is amended on the lines of section 25 of "The Intoxicating Liquors Act, 1872," in force in England. As stated in my former report, my predecessor repeatedly recommended the inclusion in the licensing-laws of the colony something equivalent to the before-mentioned section, and I can only reiterate that recommendation.

The increase of drunkenness year after year may in a great measure, I think, be ascribed (a) to the general prosperity of the colony, and (b) the large increase of shipping, especially foreign-going, attending the various ports. There is no doubt whatever that the crews of vessels in port contribute very largely to the number of drunks, and it is only fair to the permanent residents of the colony that this should be understood. The practice at many of the Courts is to "convict and discharge" persons who have no previous convictions for drunkenness recorded against them. This, so far as sailors are concerned, is, to my mind, a mistake, for, although there may be no convictions recorded against them at the particular place where they happen to be brought up, it is pretty well known that sailors (especially those employed in the stoke-holes of steam-vessels) who are addicted to drink very seldom obtain leave on arrival in port without getting more or less under the influence of drink.

#### SLY-GROG SELLING.

There were eighty-eight prosecutions for this offence during the year 1898, resulting in fifty-eight convictions, fines amounting to £1,526 10s. being imposed. This offence, although not generally so prevalent as a year or two ago, is still rife in many districts. Owing to the obloquy that falls on all persons who assist police in these cases it is extremely difficult to obtain the necessary evidence to justify proceedings. Public sympathy is invariably with the sly-grog seller, and it is hopeless for a witness to attempt to obtain employment in the district after he has been a witness for the prosecution in one of these cases. Were he a criminal his chances would be infinitely better. In a recent case this sympathy with the sly-grog seller went to the extent of threatening the employer of a witness that unless he at once dismissed that witness from his service the patronage of the persons so threatening would be withdrawn from him. The employer was a business-man, and perhaps it is needless to say the threat had the desired result. This unfortunate witness, who had a wife and family to support, thus found himself thrown out of employment, had to break up his home, and leave the district, all because he had committed the terrible offence of assisting the authorities in enforcing the law.

#### GAMING-LAWS.

There were during the year 1898 170 prosecutions for offences under these laws, resulting in 140 convictions, being an increase of 115 on the figures of the preceding year. Although these figures show that the police have been more active during the past year in carrying out these laws, I regret to say there is little indication that the evil is decreasing. All I stated in my last report under this head applies with equal force to the present date, and will continue to apply so long as the law remains as at present. Had the Bill before Parliament last session been passed into law the police would have had a workable instrument. Until some such measure is passed the public must put up with the presence of betting-men in the streets, and the consequent liability, owing to temptation always present, of the earnings of their relatives and friends being diverted from the channels into which such earnings should naturally flow.

The municipal authorities of the four principal cities are now passing by-laws with a view of dealing with this evil, and in this they will have the hearty co-operation of the police, but I am by no means sanguine these by-laws will be as effective as anticipated. To rebut the evidence of the constable there will probably be half a dozen friends of the defendant called in his defence, and as the majority of persons engaged in book-making have their own particular idea of the value of an oath I fear the solitary constable will in most cases be outsworn.

I trust a renewed attempt will be made during the ensuing session of Parliament to pass the before-mentioned Bill into law.

#### MAGISTERIAL COMMENTS.

Recently there have been several Magisterial comments on the methods adopted by police in obtaining evidence against persons engaged in the sly-grog traffic, and illegal (or what is popularly known as "tote") betting. In glaring cases of breaches of the law, and where it was impossible to obtain evidence by other means, the police have endeavoured to procure persons to either purchase liquor from the former or make bets with the latter, and in some instances have been successful. These methods a very small minority of the Magistrates have considered it their duty to describe as "dangerous and undesirable." I admit that if evidence could be otherwise obtained the course described should not be resorted to, but I am unable to discover other means, and if the learned gentlemen in question know of other means of obtaining the necessary evidence I should be extremely grateful if they would communicate them to me. The matter simply resolves itself into this: that the police are to stand by and allow wholesale breaches of the law to go on unchecked, although in the case of illegal street-betting the nuisance has become little short of a crying scandal, or procure evidence in the manner described. So long as none but notorious offenders are by these means brought to justice I prefer to continue on the latter course, and I feel confident