

that, notwithstanding these occasional remarks from the Magisterial Bench, the police will receive the support of the unprejudiced portion of the community. If there was a suspicion even that an attempt had been made to entrap an innocent or ignorant person into breaking the law, then there would be some point in these remarks, but I defy any one to prove that such has been the case, and in the absence of such proof I submit these Magisterial comments are uncalled-for, and can only tend to deter the police from endeavouring to enforce a proper observance of the law and thereby check what is admitted to be a growing evil. I may add that during my upwards of twenty-six years' experience before the London Metropolitan Police-courts the Magistrates presiding at those Courts (amongst whom were the late Sir Thomas Henry, the late Sir James Ingham, the late Mr. Montagu Williams, Sir John Bridge, and Sir James Vaughan) always accepted without comment evidence against notorious offenders obtained in the manner herein described, being careful, however, to see that the practice was not abused by an attempt to entrap an innocent person. If the Magistrates here were to reserve their comments until there was a suggestion that the practice was being abused, then I should have no cause to complain, but the effect of the present what I consider to be uncalled-for remarks is to encourage the law-breaker and discourage the policeman.

SECOND-HAND SHOPS.

A large percentage of the property stolen in the colony finds its way into the second-hand shops, the keepers of which places are at present under no obligation to afford police information, and I regret to say but very few voluntarily do so, the result being that thieves find a ready and comparatively safe means of disposing of the proceeds of their depredations. It would undoubtedly be a great public benefit if all second-hand dealers were compelled to conduct their business under license, and to keep a record of all their transactions, such record to be accessible to police at all reasonable times. I find a Bill dealing with this matter was introduced in Parliament in 1896, but was dropped after the first reading. I most strenuously urge that this Bill be reintroduced during the ensuing session, and an effort made to pass it into law.

CONDUCT OF MEMBERS OF THE FORCE.

There has latterly been a decided improvement in the conduct of the men, and this is most noticeable as regards offences relating to drink. During the year four men were convicted of drunkenness, and one for being under the influence of drink, but the last sustained complaint of this nature occurred nearly six months ago. I trust the intemperate members of the Force have now been weeded out, and that drunkenness in future will be of very rare occurrence.

The establishment of the increment system of pay in lieu of classes, the granting of lodging-allowance to married men with over three years' service, special allowance to clerks and acting detectives, and accumulative leave have given immense satisfaction to the men. They now fully understand their present position in the service, and realise that their future advancement depends entirely on their good conduct and attention to duty. They are throwing more energy into their work, and are more obedient to their officers.

SUB-INSPECTORS.

The appointment of Sub-Inspectors was authorised on the 31st March last, but as these officers have scarcely yet taken up their positions it is too early for me to pass any opinion upon these appointments.

MEDICAL OFFICERS.

The appointment of four medical officers has been generally appreciated by the men, but the appointments are of too recent date to enable me to speak definitely upon them. Nothing, however, has yet occurred to lead me to doubt the wisdom of the appointments.

TRAINING DEPOT.

A training depot was established in December last, and twenty-four men, in two classes, have now been passed through. Six others have, for various reasons, been discharged from the depot during training, or resigned. Those who passed through successfully all applied themselves most assiduously to the work set them, and the training they have undergone will, I am convinced, have a lasting and beneficial effect on them.

The cost of establishing this depot was inappreciable. Mount Cook Police-station has been utilised for the purpose, and the training staff drawn from the Force without augmentation thereto.

The success of the depot at so little cost to the colony is mainly attributable to the indefatigability of Sergeant O'Donovan, the instructor, who is endowed with a natural aptitude for imparting instruction, and the care and attention shown towards the probationers by Sergeant Briggs, who has charge of Mount Cook Station, and who has taken upon himself the whole of the work in connection with the depot, except the actual training, in addition to his ordinary duties.

All probationers while in the depot undergo a course of instruction in first-aid to the injured, and before being passed out are examined by a medical gentleman appointed by the Wellington Centre of the St. John Ambulance Association.

"INFANT LIFE PROTECTION ACT, 1896."

This Act, which is administered solely by police, has, after two years' trial, been found to work fairly well. These licensed homes are inspected periodically by the police matrons in the four principal cities, and in other places by police officers. With very few exceptions the licensees have complied with the conditions of the law; the homes have been found clean and tidy, and the infants well looked after.

During the year 1898 there were 553 licensed homes throughout the colony, representing 829 infants. Twenty-seven deaths occurred in the licensed homes during the year, an inquest being