

I now find the telephone is largely resorted to by the betting-men in carrying on their illegal calling; and many of the so-called private billiard-rooms are little else than gambling-places. Although "The Municipal Corporations Act, 1900," section 404, gives the local authorities power to pass by-laws for the regulation of these billiard-rooms, nothing has yet, so far as I am aware, been done in that direction; consequently these places are still under no restrictions whatever as to closing, &c., with the result that many young men, much to their detriment, are inveigled into these rooms, and kept there until the small hours of the morning, associating with spiliers and other undesirable *habitués*, who subsist on following race-meetings during the daytime and frequenting billiard-rooms at night.

INDICTABLE OFFENCES SUMMARY JURISDICTION.

The amending Act of last session has been found to work well, except section 6, which gives the right to claim trial by jury for offences punishable by imprisonment for any term exceeding three months. I do not think the Legislature, when passing this section, realised that persons charged under sections 24 (obscenity), 27 (idle and disorderly persons), and 28 (rogues and vagabonds) of "The Police Offences Act, 1884"; section 159 (selling liquor without a license after second conviction) of "The Licensing Act, 1881"; and other somewhat similar offences, could under the section in question claim to be tried by a jury. Under this section a sly-grog seller at present stands committed for trial at the next Auckland Supreme Court sessions; and in another case a man charged with drunkenness and using obscene language originally claimed the right to be tried by a jury, and the Stipendiary Magistrate would have had no alternative but to commit the case to the Supreme Court had not the man subsequently withdrawn his claim.

SECOND-HAND SHOPS.

The remarks in my previous reports under this heading still apply. Many of these shops are little else than places for the disposal of stolen property. I trust an attempt will be made during the ensuing session to reintroduce and pass into law the Bill which was before Parliament in 1896.

I also draw attention to the remarks of Inspector Cullen on this subject, and indorse them in their entirety.

"INFANT LIFE PROTECTION ACT, 1896."

During the year there were 548 registered homes throughout the colony, representing 872 infants, against 565 homes and 883 infants in 1899, and 553 homes and 829 infants in 1898.

Twenty-six deaths occurred in the homes during the year, against fifty-four in 1899 and twenty-seven in 1898, being equal to 29.81 per thousand last year, against 61.15 per thousand in 1899 and 32.57 in 1898. The mortality throughout the colony of infants under four years of age (the age to which the Act applies) for the year was 28.9 per thousand, almost equal to the mortality in the homes. This is very satisfactory, in view of the fact that the infants in the homes are all reared artificially, and are in the majority of cases the illegitimate offspring of very young mothers, many of whom, for obvious reasons, are not over-anxious that the infants should survive birth.

Eleven licensees were prosecuted during the year for breaches of the Act, of whom nine were convicted, and three licenses were cancelled.

CONDUCT OF MEMBERS OF THE FORCE.

During the past year the conduct of the members of the Force has, on the whole, been very good. Serious breaches of the regulations, especially in relation to drink, are now of very rare occurrence indeed. The young men taken into the Force during the past two years, direct from private life, are almost without exception very well behaved, and give promise of making good police officers. The men are nearly all either natives of the colony or came here when very young.

TRAINING DEPOT, CANDIDATES, ETC.

The training depot established in December, 1898, continues to work well. Since its establishment 134 recruits have been admitted thereto, of whom 117 passed through and were appointed constables, while seventeen have been discharged from the depot before completing their training, for various reasons. Of the 117 appointed constables, 105 are still serving in the Force, the remaining twelve being accounted for as follows: Resigned voluntarily on application, 8; resigned to proceed with contingents to South Africa, 2; dead, 1; and compulsory resignation, 1.

Owing to the extension of the city in the Newtown district, the whole of Mount Cook Police-station is now required for the police doing duty there, consequently provision will have to be made for carrying on the training depot. I have been in consultation with the architect of the Public Works Department, who advises that the necessary accommodation for the training depot, quarters for a married sergeant, and increased cell-accommodation, both of which are also much needed at Mount Cook, can be provided by additions to the present buildings. An estimate of the cost is being prepared with a view of having it included in the forthcoming estimates.

The Police Force appears popular as a means of livelihood with the young men of the colony. During the year ended 31st March last forty-five men were enrolled to fill vacancies—five from the Permanent Militia, and the remainder from private life. During the same period the names of ninety-three applicants from private life were placed on the list of candidates, which already included several hundred who applied during preceding years.

In filling vacancies men of the best education and physique, all other things being equal, are selected. As regards education, the candidates cannot, as a whole, be considered to rank very high, very few of them indeed, when first applying for appointment, being able to pass an examination equal to that of the Fourth Standard in the public schools of the colony. By careful selection, however, those admitted to the training depot are, after a month's training, generally able to pass