

hundred years old he will always have to meet the charge of having parted with an immense area of the land of the colony to a foreign syndicate. Of this fact, Sir George Grey loves to remind him, and should the Auckland Knight find his way down to Wellington next session he is bound to give Sir Robert a very bad quarter of an hour on the old grievance. After the bargain had been made, it was found that good as it was for the Company the latter could not complete it. They had not the cash they represented themselves as having, and the works once begun were carried on in a half-hearted sort of way which bespoke lack of capital, and which if persisted in would have resulted perhaps in the completion of the line somewhere about the year 4000. Then came months, even years, of weary squabbling between the Government and the Company, of negotiations which never came to anything beyond inspired newspaper paragraphs—of as accurate a character as most paragraphs of a like nature—and a shady flow of sneering and unavailing jaw in the House. Finally Richard the Fourth took the matter in hand, in conjunction with a representative of the Company; a new arrangement was drawn up, one which is none too satisfactory for the colony, but better than the old state of do-nothing; and then, for a time, the Midland Railway again dropped out of the public mind. Now, however, we have word from London that the Company have accepted the new terms and that a desperate effort will be made to raise the million and a half necessary for the completion of the line. Let us hope this desperate effort may be successful. Whether the line will ever pay, whether indeed it was ever really wanted, save by the Canterbury people, who thought it meant the expenditure of a large sum of money and consequently a mild "boom" for that province, is a matter upon which there will always be serious difference of opinion. But the line has been started and cannot well be allowed to remain unfinished. Its completion—when once that million and a half is raised—will be a matter of two or three years, but in everything connected with the Midland Railway we believe only in what we see, and we should advise our Canterbury friends to be chary how they indulge in any undue enthusiasm over the matter. Time enough for hat-t rowing, speechifying and the like when the million and a half is definitely raised. Till then, ardent hope, tem-

pered by mild scepticism, will be the attitude of most people on the matter.

WHAT PRICE THE POLICE?

"Every man has his price."

Sir Robert Walpole.

Do the police make fish of one and flesh of another; do they pounce down on one offender against the law with the voracity of a vulture and let another, equally as bad, go scot free; do they, in fact, exhibit a blindness to the illegalities of some people, whilst they are eager to expose and punish the illegalities of others? These are questions which must, we fear, be answered in the affirmative, as far, at least, as Wellington is concerned. We have a particular case in mind as we write. 'Tis that of one Gunn, vendor of alleged medicines, provider of a more or less amusing variety entertainment; also, incidentally, conductor of a so-called lottery and committer of a terrible offence against the idiotic laws of his colony, in the shape of the Gaming and Lotteries Act. This man Gunn had, it appears from the reports published in the daily press of this city, conducted a certain "prize distribution," the prizes being of a trumpery value it is true, but seeing that the tickets for the said distribution only cost what is vulgarly called "a tanner," and that, for this modest expenditure, the purchaser had some two hours of comic singing, step-dancing, and other joys of the multitude "chucked in" free, gratis, and for nothing, we are not prepared to say he did not get fair value for his none too extravagant outlay. The police, however, with an omniscience in the detection of unsuspected evil, which would do credit to a Zulu witch doctor, "smell out"—the term is Matabelian and thoroughly "up to date"—a terrible offence against the majesty of the law, the morality of the individual, and the welfare of the State, and forthwith they pounced down upon the person Gunn, and hauled him off before Mr. Martin upon a charge of having committed a breach of the Gaming and Lotteries Act. The R.M. fined him £25—twenty-five golden sovereigns or notes of a non-"reconstructed" bank, and this sum Mr. Gunn had to pay up. Now we do not say that Mr. Gunn was right in committing a breach of the Gaming and Lotteries Act, nor do we say that Mr. Martin was wrong in inflicting what is, at first sight, an extremely severe, an over-severe, penalty fine; but what we do say, and say most plainly, is that there are other people besides Mr. Gunn who commit breaches of the same Act, much more serious breaches of the Act, much more serious breaches of the Act, breaches calculated, in the opinion of many people, to work widespread evil,

and yet these offenders are allowed to go untouched by the police, unpunished by the law. We will take one offence as an example, that of conducting sweeps or consultations upon horse races. On the last Wellington Cup there were two big sweeps in Wellington, each conducted in connection with a certain class of retail trade, each carried on in the most flagrantly open manner, each well known by the police to be so carried on, and each, we have very good reason to believe, patronised personally by "members of the force," the same virtuous men in blue who pounced down upon Mr. Gunn for his paltry little fault, but are as blind as bats in the day time to the much more serious offence of carrying on sweeps. One of these sweeps was for £500 in 1000 tickets at 10s. each; in the other case we are not aware of the exact amount, but the tickets were, we believe, sold at the cheaper rate of 5s., and the amounts given in prize money were of course correspondingly less. There was very little attempt at concealment as to the existence of these sweeps. Every "man about town" knew of them, casual customers at the shop in connection with which they were held, were actually importuned to buy tickets on them. The police, whose "smelling-out" powers are so wonderful, must have stuffed their ears with cotton-wool if they avoided hearing of them; and finally, as we said before, we have very good reason to believe that members of the police force actually purchase shares on these consultations, which are, we need hardly say, in distinct defiance of the Gaming and Lotteries Act. Here, we think, is a public scandal. One man, a stranger, is very severely punished for a very slight breach of the Act, whilst other men, residents, are allowed to almost openly break the law and not one word is said, no action is taken against them. How much did the police get? That is what FAIR PLAY wants to know. It also wants to know what action the Government are going to take in the matter. We distinctly and plainly charge the police with wilfully neglecting their duty; and we assert that it is entirely opposed to the spirit of British fair play to "jump" after one man for a very paltry offence and let others go free and unscathed who commit the most flagrant violations of the same law. We have said enough to day on this subject to give the public—and the police—and we trust also, the Government—something to talk about. We may return to the subject next week.

F. W. Cottrell and Co., general carriers and forwarding agents. Customhouse work of all kinds promptly and carefully attended to. We not only clear goods, but land them at customers' doors. Good storage accommodation. Furniture carefully removed.—ADVT.

Bicycles.—Mr. S. E. Wright has been appointed agent for the Star Cycles by the makers, Adams, Curties and Co., and will be pleased to see all cyclists and intending riders at his office, Mutual Life Building, Brandon Street.—ADVT.