

SLY-GROG.

During the year there were 148 prosecutions for sly-grog selling, resulting in eighty-two convictions, against 169 prosecutions and 107 convictions in 1900. The aggregate amount of fines imposed was £1,164 5s., against £1,351 4s. in the preceding year.

The difficulty experienced in former years in obtaining evidence in these cases continues. Some persons apparently have no scruples in going even to the length of perjuring themselves to assist the sly-grog dealers in escaping justice.

GAMING OFFENCES.

There were 104 prosecutions, resulting in eighty-three convictions, during the year for offences against the gaming laws, against 155 prosecutions and ninety-six convictions in 1900.

The remarks in my last annual report anent the difficulty of dealing with illegal "tote" betting men, and the necessity for amended legislation, still apply in their entirety.

The municipal authorities have not yet availed themselves, to any appreciable extent, of the power to regulate the so-called private billiard-rooms, given them under "The Municipal Corporations Act, 1900," with the result that many of these places are still frequently kept open until the small hours of the morning, much to the detriment of the respectable young men who are inveigled into them by spiellers and other undesirable characters for the purposes of gambling.

SECOND-HAND SHOPS.

The remarks in my former reports, advocating the licensing, &c., of second-hand dealers still apply, and I trust another attempt may be made during the coming session to get the Bill which was before Parliament last session passed into law.

As an instance of the loose, not to say criminal, manner some second-hand dealers conduct their business, I will quote a case which occupied the attention of the Magistrate's Court at Christchurch only a few days ago: Between the 26th April and the 12th May of the present year two small boys, brothers, aged respectively eleven and a half and ten years, stole the lamps from no less than nine bicycles which were left by the owners temporarily in the streets of Christchurch. These lamps ranged in value from 10s. to 15s. 6d. each. In every case the children who had stolen them took the lamp practically direct to a certain second-hand dealer, who readily purchased them for either 2s. or 2s. 6d. each. In one case the lamp was stolen on a Sunday; but that made no difference, as the second-hand dealer received it the same day, although for some reason, which is not quite apparent, withheld payment until the following morning. Of course, the dealer endeavoured to persuade the Court that there were reasons to believe the children came by the lamps honestly; but the Court was not so gullible, and in cautioning the dealer to be more careful in future, remarked the sooner a measure was passed bringing second-hand dealers under proper control the better.

I have no hesitation in stating that the ready method of disposing of stolen property afforded by the second-hand shops, which are at present under no control, makes many juvenile thieves.

"INFANT LIFE PROTECTION ACT, 1896."

During the year there were 565 registered homes throughout the colony, representing 943 infants, against 548 homes and 872 infants in 1900.

Twenty-nine deaths occurred in the homes during the year, against twenty-six in the preceding year, being equal to 30·75 per thousand, against 29·81 per thousand in 1900.

The mortality throughout the colony of infants under four years of age (the age to which the Act applies) was 26·37 per thousand, or only 4·38 less than in the homes. This, I submit, may be regarded as satisfactory, considering that the infants in the homes are reared artificially, and that a very large percentage, through being illegitimate, have not received, prior to being admitted to the homes, the careful nurturing that infants brought into the world under more favourable conditions are likely to receive, and are weakly in consequence.

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

CONDUCT OF MEMBERS OF THE FORCE.

The conduct of the members of the Force during the year has, taken generally, been very good. There were no dismissals, and only four convictions for over-indulgence in drink. In none of those cases was the drink obtained while the men were on duty.

The visit of Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York threw a large amount of extra work on the police, and the rapid transportation from one centre to another, together with the difficulty experienced in obtaining suitable lodgings, entailed very considerable discomfort; but the extra work was performed with credit to the men, and the discomfort was cheerfully endured.

TRAINING DEPOT, CANDIDATES, ETC.

The training depot continues to work well, and its effect on the men who have passed through it is very marked.

The benefit to the public arising from the instruction in ambulance work received by every man who passes through the depot is demonstrated from time to time by the efficient "first aid" rendered in cases of accidents, &c.

The number of eligible candidates continues to be very much in excess of the vacancies to be filled. At the commencement of the year under review there were several hundreds of eligible candidates on the list.