

Cases of lunacy and escaping from lunatic asylums, which have hitherto been included in the criminal returns, are now omitted therefrom for the first time.

Preventible offences, such as burglary, breaking into shops, dwellings, &c., forcible entry, forgery, malicious injury to property, and thefts of various kinds, have increased during the year by 45—viz., from 3,432 in 1901 to 3,477 in 1902. This increase, however, is not in proportion to the increase in population, the figures being one offence to every 239·25 of the population in 1901, whereas in 1902 there was but one offence to every 241·85 of the population, thus showing that there has been no deterioration in the efficiency of the Force as far as these preventible offences are concerned.

The percentage of arrests, summonses, &c., to the number of offences against the person reported during the year, which was 98·55 in 1901, was during 1902 97·49; while for offences against property the percentage of arrests, &c., rose from 72·98 in 1901 to 76·02 in 1902, and this is much the highest yet attained.

The percentage of arrests or summonses to all cases reported, irrespective of class, also shows slight improvement, the figures being, for 1901, 93·86, while for the year under review they were 94·45; thus demonstrating that as a detective body the Force still continues to improve from year to year, notwithstanding that the population goes steadily on increasing, which renders detection more difficult.

The number of indecent and sexual offences shows practically no change. During the year 1901 there were 315 of these offences, while during 1902 the number was 318. The revolting crime of incest has, however, risen from 4 in 1901 to 7 in 1902.

The increase from 26 in 1901 to 66 in 1902 in the cases of arson appears somewhat alarming, but it is attributable to the action of two boys, aged fifteen years, who amused themselves by roaming around Auckland and setting fire to places for the mere pleasure afforded them of witnessing the fire brigade turn out. These two boys were the cause of no less than forty-two fires. They were ultimately arrested, convicted, and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment each. This fire-raising mania is becoming very common. Quite recently there have been five cases, in addition to the boys named above, and in two of these cases the culprits, when caught by the police, were, at the instance of their friends, committed to asylums as lunatics to escape the disgrace of a conviction for arson. It is to be regretted the parents abstained so long from taking action, thereby endangering the lives and property of their neighbours. If this indifference, which is so prevalent on the part of many parents, as to the manner in which their offspring spend their spare time, especially after working or school hours, continues, it will become a moot question if, as a matter of equity, the law should not be made to cast upon parents responsibility for the mischievous acts committed by their children.

DRUNKENNESS.

There were 8,269 persons charged with drunkenness throughout the colony during the year (7,405 males and 864 females), against 8,057 (7,081 males and 976 females) during the preceding year, being an increase of 212. The number contributed by each of the four principal centres was: Auckland, 1,154 (1,028 males and 126 females), against 1,529 (1,292 males and 237 females) in 1901, being a decrease of 375; Wellington, 1,740 (1,437 males and 303 females), against 1,172 (924 males and 248 females) in 1901, being an increase of 568; Christchurch, 871 (703 males and 168 females), against 950 (766 males and 184 females) in 1901, being a decrease of 79; Dunedin, 480 (380 males and 100 females), against 550 (453 males and 97 females) in 1901, being a decrease of 70.

In the four principal centres there were 135 arrests for drunkenness on Sundays during the year, against 168 in 1901, being a decrease of 33. This number is made up as follows: Auckland, 16 (11 males and 5 females); Wellington, 39 (30 males and 9 females); Christchurch, 38 (33 males and 5 females); and Dunedin, 42 (36 males and 6 females). Although this shows a considerable diminution on the preceding year, these Sunday arrests continue to demonstrate that Sunday trading still exists to a considerable extent; and I reiterate that until the law is amended in the direction of making it illegal for persons other than lodgers or *bond fide* travellers to be on licensed premises during prohibited hours it will be absolutely impossible for the police to keep this illegal trading within reasonable bounds.

There were 230 prosecutions against publicans throughout the colony during the year, resulting in 94 convictions, against 219 prosecutions and 91 convictions in 1901. These prosecutions were distributed as follows: Auckland District, 38, with 21 convictions, against 25 prosecutions and 11 convictions in 1901; Napier District, 30 prosecutions with 7 convictions, against 15 prosecutions and 5 convictions in 1901; Wanganui District, 48 prosecutions with 18 convictions, against 32 prosecutions and 13 convictions in 1901; Wellington District, 18 prosecutions with 7 convictions, against 13 prosecutions and 7 convictions in 1901; Westland District, 26 prosecutions with 14 convictions, against 51 prosecutions and 26 convictions in 1901; Canterbury District, 46 prosecutions with 18 convictions, against 44 prosecutions and 13 convictions in 1901; Otago District, 13 prosecutions with 5 convictions, against 39 prosecutions and 16 convictions in 1901; and Southland (a new district created since last report), 11 prosecutions with 4 convictions.

In the four principal centres the prosecutions were: Auckland, 19 prosecutions with 11 convictions; Wellington, 9 prosecutions with 3 convictions (as before stated, one of these three convictions has been quashed on appeal, and another is now the subject of an appeal); Christchurch, 18 prosecutions with 6 convictions; and Dunedin, 11 prosecutions with 5 convictions: the proportion of convictions to prosecutions throughout the colony being only 40·86 per centum, and this does not include the convictions quashed on appeal.

The following table gives the number of previous convictions against the persons charged with drunkenness, so far as known to the police; also the number of persons who, when charged, were members of the crews of vessels in the various ports of the colony. It will be observed that