

It seems desirable that persons convicted under the gaming laws should in no case have the privilege of electing to be tried by a jury as at present ("Indictable Offences Summary Jurisdiction Amendment Act, 1900," section 6), as, no matter how conclusive the evidence of guilt is, juries are reluctant to convict, and the ends of justice are frequently defeated. The law as regards "tote" betting and betting with infants, &c., could be carried out much more satisfactorily and effectively if witnesses could not, as at present, refuse to give evidence on the grounds of incriminating themselves. As in "The Evidence Further Amendment Act, 1901," a Judge or Justice should be empowered to examine any witness.

The amendment to the law relating to billiard-rooms passed last session promises well, and has already been productive of good results.

SECOND-HAND DEALERS.

"The Second-hand Dealers Act, 1902," continues to work well, and gives every satisfaction.

"THE INFANT LIFE PROTECTION ACT, 1896."

During the year there were 544 registered homes throughout the colony, representing 854 infants, against 583 homes and 936 infants in 1902.

Twenty-eight deaths occurred in the homes during the year, against 44 in the preceding year. Six licensees were prosecuted for breaches of the Act, and 4 convictions resulted, against 18 prosecutions and 12 convictions in 1902. No licenses were cancelled, and no neglect of licensees was disclosed at inquests.

DISTRICT INSPECTORS.

I am satisfied that the Inspectors in charge of districts are well qualified for the responsible positions they hold, and that they control those under their charge and conduct the multifarious duties appertaining to their respective offices in a very efficient and creditable manner.

SUB-INSPECTORS.

The Sub-Inspectors in the four centres also give every satisfaction in the performance of their duties, the creation of this rank being an essential step towards the better supervision of the inferior ranks and the proper conduct of police prosecutions.

SERGEANTS.

There are at present serving 59 sergeants, 25 of whom are under fifty years of age, 27 between fifty and sixty years, and 7 over sixty and under sixty-five years.

Although the majority of those sergeants are evidently capable, energetic, and trustworthy men a number of the senior sergeants lack the ability and energy required to maintain the discipline and control of those under them, and in consequence the men become relax and negligent in the performance of their duties. I entirely concur with my predecessor that if we are to have an efficient Police Force younger and better qualified men than hitherto will have to be promoted, and I am satisfied there are plenty of constables now serving, aged from forty to forty-five years, with fifteen to twenty years' service, who are well qualified in every respect for promotion.

I also recommend the introduction of an educational examination to ascertain whether those constables recommended for promotion are qualified to discharge efficiently the duties which would devolve upon them if promoted.

CONSTABLES.

On the whole the constables give general satisfaction in the performance of their duties, and I am pleased to observe that many of them are very intelligent and energetic, having a good knowledge of the law; they take an interest in the prevention and detection of crime. On the other hand it is apparent that more supervision is required, especially in the outer districts, and with this view I have recommended an augmentation to the present strength of the sergeants.

DETECTIVES.

I am pleased to report that during the past year the detective staff deserve credit for the able manner in which (assisted by the preventive branch) they have dealt with criminals, and kept crime in check.

The fact that the number of serious crimes has considerably decreased during the year, and undetected cases have diminished, tends to demonstrate the efficiency of this branch of the service.

DISTRICT CLERKS.

The District Clerks, especially in the four centres, have an immense amount of clerical work of a varied character to perform, their position being one of considerable responsibility, and I am pleased to report that on the whole their duties are carried out in a very satisfactory and efficient manner.

CONDUCT OF MEMBERS OF THE FORCE.

During the past year the conduct of the members of the Force showed a slight improvement as compared with the preceding year, and the number of punishments it was found necessary to inflict for misconduct was somewhat fewer.