

Escapes.—During the year 24 prisoners and 8 Borstal detainees escaped from custody, while 1 prisoner and 3 Borstal detainees attempted to escape. All were reapprehended, but one again escaped.

Borstal Receptions.—A total of 133 lads and 23 young women were received as direct committals to Borstal, and 4 male and 2 females were transferred from the child-welfare homes. Four males were transferred from reformatory institutions to Borstal. Of the aggregate numbers dealt with at Borstal since the passing of the Prevention of Crime Act, 1924, only 18 per cent. have again appeared before the Courts.

Mental Defectives.—Twenty-four persons certified as mentally defective were transferred to mental hospitals during the year, 5 before conviction and 19 subsequent thereto.

Industrial Activities.—During the year prisoners have been employed mainly at farming, quarrying, roadworks, tailoring, bootmaking, and laundering. Besides its occupational value, a good proportion of the work is directly related to the war effort. The total credits to the vote for the year were £80,514, representing an increase of approximately £3,000 on the previous year, and thereby reducing the gross expenditure from £158,704 to a net charge against taxation of £78,190 or £80 per head.

The Department has continued its policy, as far as practicable, of making itself self-sustained in respect of foodstuffs off its farms—e.g., meat, milk, vegetables, &c.—and in addition has produced large quantities for the open market. At Waikeria sufficient tobacco is grown to supply the whole of the Department's requirements, and this institution also supplies pasteurized milk to adjacent schools. From other institutions milk and vegetables are supplied for Army requirements.

I desire to place on record the Department's appreciation of the co-operation of Visiting Justices, who assist in the maintenance and discipline and regularly inspect institutions to ensure that the standard of conditions is properly maintained. Thanks are also extended to Official Visitors, the Borstal Committees, the Borstal Association, and other voluntary helpers. The Department is indebted to the psychiatrists attached to the Mental Hospitals Department for their co-operation in dealing with mentally defective inmates and in advising as to their method of treatment.

I desire also to place on record my sincere thanks to the members of the staff for their loyal assistance in carrying out the work of the Department under the difficult conditions that now obtain.

B. L. DALLARD,
Controller-General of Prisons.

OFFENDERS PROBATION: SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT (UNDER OFFENDERS PROBATION ACT, 1920, AND CRIMES AMENDMENT ACT, 1910) FOR THE YEAR 1941.

The CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER to the Hon. the MINISTER OF JUSTICE.

THE following is the annual report under the Offenders Probation Act and the Crimes Amendment Act for the year ended 31st December, 1941.

Owing to the general paper shortage the reports from District Probation Officers are omitted from this report, but an examination of such reports reveals that, in the main, probationers have reacted reasonably satisfactorily, the number who have relapsed being just over 10 per cent. of the total dealt with.

During the year 879 persons were admitted to probation by the Courts in lieu of more severe forms of punishment. The majority of those placed on probation were in the post-adolescent age-group, 458 being under twenty-five years of age and 38 per cent. of the total dealt with being under twenty years of age. There has been no material increase in the aggregate number of offenders dealt with, if those committed for breaches of the National Service Act are excluded, thus the fact emerges that whilst it may be satisfactory to observe a steady diminution in the number of older offenders who relapsed into crime it is less satisfactory to observe that the criminal ranks are so readily filled by a steady inflow of young offenders, and largely first offenders. Reclamative policies in penal methods—be it by an efficient probation system or by wise prison treatment—are at best “an ambulance at the bottom of the cliff.” It is the initial lapse into crime that should be averted. Is it that our methods of penal treatment are not adequately deterrent to prevent such a lapse, or is it that our social code and our ethical standards are at fault? The initial lapse is not the fault of the penal methods, but is rather an indictment of our social institutions whose function it is to instil the fundamentals of moral conduct—the home, the school, and the church. It has to be admitted that the war has undoubtedly brought in its wake a crop of social problems, the quickened tempo of life, the anxieties, and the loosening of conventional restrictions, these all tend towards a drifting from socially acceptable standards—sacrilege and sacrifice are the strange bedfellows of war.

The amount of money collected by Probation Officers from probationers by way of restitution during the financial year ended 31st March, 1942, was £4,863. The requirement to make restitution is a salutary factor in probation. The total amount collected since the inception of the scheme is now over £92,200. Present conditions have facilitated the ready absorption of probationers into employment, and in this connection the Department has had the ready co-operation of State Placement Officers. Over eighty probationers proceeded overseas on active service during the year, and at the 31st December many more were undergoing training.

Parole.—The figures under this heading deal with persons released on license from a prison, reformatory, or Borstal institution, as distinct from those admitted to probation in the first instance by the Courts. The statistics show that during the year 1941, 317 persons were released from institutions on probationary license on the recommendation of the Prisons Board. Of these, only 2 were