

Many of the cases were those of persons who came more than once before the Board. The total number of distinct persons who came under the jurisdiction of the Board as habitual criminals during the year was seventy-one, and the number of distinct persons under reformative detention 229.

HABITUAL CRIMINALS AND OFFENDERS.

The Board recommended thirty-five persons of this class for release on probation, and ten, including five who were already on probation, for absolute discharge. Fifteen of those released on probation broke the conditions of their license, and twelve were returned to prison. The three remaining have not reported themselves, and their present whereabouts is not known. Satisfactory reports of the conduct of twenty released during the year were received. Of those released in 1911 and 1912 twenty broke the terms of their probation, and were thus dealt with: Returned to prison, thirteen; whereabouts unknown, seven. The total number released on probation during the years 1911, 1912, and 1913 was seventy-four, and of these fifteen were convicted of fresh offences, viz.: In 1911, five; in 1912, six; in 1913, four.

PERSONS UNDERGOING REFORMATIVE TREATMENT.

The number of persons under reformative treatment who were recommended for release or discharge by the Board was ninety-nine. As was pointed out in the report for 1912, the Board endeavours to provide for a part of the term of reformative treatment being served out of prison on license, and so far the results of this method have been sufficiently satisfactory to be encouraging. In twenty-six cases the probationary license has been cancelled, five having been found guilty of a specific offence, and twenty-one having committed breaches of the terms of their license.

SPECIAL PRISONS.

Waipa Prison camp is still being maintained for prisoners who have not before been in prison. A few of those under reformative treatment are sent there. The tree-planting and work done by the prisoners is good, and the surroundings are all that can be desired for leading a healthy and an industrious life. At Kaingaroa, the other tree-planting camp in the North Island, where also some prisoners under reformative treatment are sent, good work has also been done, and some prisoners on leaving have been engaged for forestry work elsewhere. At Waikeria the farm has made great progress, and the necessary permanent buildings are being erected by the prisoners. In these three industrial camps the prisoners are doing well and performing valuable work. Their open-air life and strenuous work have had good effect on both their physique and conduct.

The Invercargill Prison has always a large number of prisoners, mostly young men, who have been sentenced to reformative treatment. The work done by the prisoners has been arduous, and has also been valuable to the State, as rich land suitable for agriculture is being reclaimed. The area to be obtained by the Department will be 650 acres. Besides the reclamation of lands, the prisoners have erected buildings, and also made a large number of concrete blocks which have a ready sale.

SAVING HABIT.

The saving habit is being encouraged among the habitual criminals, and many of them have accumulated the whole or part of the small sums granted to them—6d. a day—for industry and good conduct.

FEMALE PRISONERS.

The female prison at Addington has been opened during the year. It is well suited for its purposes. The number of female offenders declared habitual is five, and they were thus dealt with: Released on probation, three; in prison, two. The number of females under reformative treatment is five. Serious crime amongst females is almost unknown in New Zealand. Only twenty were sentenced by the Supreme Court in 1912 and twelve in 1913. There are in all the cities some drunkards and prostitutes who are continually being received into and discharged from the larger prisons, and it seems to us a question requiring grave consideration if some steps should not be taken to detain those who have had many convictions for some long period, and that they should be set to some kind of industrial work beyond the kind of work usually done by female prisoners in prisons.

SKILLED LABOUR FOR PRISONERS.

Up to the present time no systematic endeavour has been made to teach skilled trades to prisoners, and neither the construction nor the equipment of our gaols offer suitable facilities for the training of skilled tradesmen. Apart, however, from this consideration there remains the question of the competition of prison labour with free labour, which is one for the Executive Government to decide. Seeing that the main industries of the Dominion are connected with pastoral and agricultural pursuits, the Prison authorities aim more at turning out handy men competent to do farm-work and able to carry out the rougher kinds of skilled labour that are required on farms. It is hoped that in institutions such as Waikeria and others the prisoners will be trained sufficiently in this direction to ensure them constant employment in the country on their release.