

In the engineering and tinsmithing branches some very good work has been done for other prisons as well as those in Wellington.

At the Terrace Prison the prisoners working in the tailors' shop have been kept fully occupied making uniforms for all the Prison officers in the Dominion, and clothing for the male prisoners. The garden at this prison has supplied Mount Cook as well as The Terrace with vegetables for the prisoners.

The Visiting Justices and Official Visitors have made periodical visits to the three Wellington prisons. The Lady Official Visitor, Mrs. Duncan, has visited the female prisoners weekly, and has read to them, and introduced singing amongst the inmates. The female prisoners in their spare moments after labour hours have voluntarily made articles for the Red Cross Association.

FIRST OFFENDERS' PROBATION ACT.

EXTRACTS FROM THE HONORARY PROBATION OFFICERS' REPORTS.

REV. F. R. JEFFREYS, AUCKLAND.

During the year ending 31st March, 1918, I received from the Auckland Magistrates' and Supreme Courts sixty first-offender probationers. Twenty-eight of these were for the maximum term of three years, fourteen for a term of two years, seventeen for a term of one year, and one for a term of eighteen months. Out of these sixty cases received there were only two who again had to be brought before the Court charged with failing to carry out their probation. A failure of only $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. in such a large number of varied cases is most satisfactory and encouraging, and is sufficient proof of the fact that the benefits of the First Offenders' Probation Act, 1908, are very real, and that it pays to give young delinquents every opportunity to reform. The two failures were not altogether unexpected, one being a weak-minded woman who cannot be fully accounted responsible for her actions. The other case was that of a young man who continued well for some months until an accident rendered him unfit for hard work, and the consequent idleness gave him an opportunity to commit a crime which I do not think would have happened if he had kept in constant work. Poverty and idleness were the chief contributing factors in his fall.

This year I would again wish to emphasize the great importance of careful inquiry into the antecedents of accused persons, and the adapting of conditions of restraint to meet the peculiar and particular needs of individuals in order to make probation truly successful. In this department I have to record my gratitude to the police for their unfailing kindness and assistance in co-operating with me, and also to the Judges and Magistrates who have freely accepted the various recommendations made by your officer. The gentlemen on the Bench in our two Courts have strengthened my hands in many ways in supporting any action I have taken to make probationers fully realize that probation is a serious matter, and cannot be treated lightly or trifled with. The monthly report of a probationer to his officer as required by the present statutory condition is not sufficient, and so I have generally requested the Court to impose the special condition that "the accused must report at such times and places as the Probation Officer may direct." By using this special condition freely and interpreting it to meet individual cases I have been able to keep many a probationer to his probation. Most of my probationers report to me weekly, some fortnightly, and thus I keep in closer touch with them. This, of course, makes the work very much heavier for the Probation Officer, but the ends attained during my three years' services have more than justified the extra work. I have found my university training in mental science, especially psychology, of great use in dealing with youthful offenders. One very pronounced fact that I have constantly come up against in seeking root causes of offences is the ugly fact of self-pollution, and by tackling this problem with common-sense and sympathetic and simple means many young men have been persuaded to lead clean lives. I have discussed difficult cases with medical friends, and have had their approval of methods adopted to combat the trouble. Another most encouraging fact has been that many of my lads have enlisted and have made good many times over. During the three years I have acted as Probation Officer I have collected over £700 from probationers on restitution and costs of prosecution orders.

During the year I have transferred several cases to other districts and have received cases on transfer also, but I always find the best results obtainable from those whose cases I have had from the beginning, because of my familiarity with the root causes of the trouble.

At the 31st March, 1918, I had 103 probationers under my care. During the year I also received from both Courts a number of informal probationers: these are accused persons whose records debarred them from receiving probation, but owing to the circumstances of the case the Court orders them to come up for sentence at stated times, and places them under the superintendence of the Probation Officer.

I am convinced that the time has come when there might be several amendments made to the existing First Offenders' Probation Act of 1908, in order to widen its scope and extend its usefulness. Any help I can give in the matter will readily be at your disposal.

In conclusion I would like to state that some years of practical experience in our law-courts confirms me in the opinion that the benefits of probation are of untold value to the community, and the First Offenders' Probation Act is one of the finest things connected with the administration of justice in this Dominion.