

Of those released from prison on license, 30 completed their terms of probation satisfactorily, while 4 were discharged from probation by the Prisons Board. Two obtained employment on overseas vessels and left the Dominion by permission, and 14 defaulted, 11 of whom were sentenced for other offences committed while on probation, and 3 absconded.

The amounts paid to probationers in respect of prison earnings are as follows: April, £34 6s. 8d.; May, £78 5s.; June, £22 10s.; July, £30; August, £61; September, £5; October, £27; November, £36; December, £100 15s. 6d.; January, £77; February, £47 10s.; March, £35 10s.

The previous habits and associations of numbers of the probationers in this category make it difficult for those of them who are honestly endeavouring to retrieve past errors. On the other hand, it is found that there are those who either cannot or will not make the necessary endeavour to rehabilitate themselves. The average number reporting monthly being 65, and the defaulters 14, shows slightly over 9 per cent. of failures. This compares more than favourably with previous years' results.

There is a phase in connection with these men released on license to which I desire to draw attention. It has been noted that many are released on probation about the end of the year. I venture the opinion that this is not in the best interests of those released, for the following reasons: Employment is almost impossible to obtain, as, owing to the fact that the Christmas vacation is so near, there are few new engagements made. Those in steady employment do not readily leave their situations at that time of year, and employers are averse to starting new hands, being content to mark time owing to the proximity of the holidays. Again, businesses are closed down for some time, and it has been found that the men released at that time are infected with the holiday spirit, and do not make much effort to settle to steady employment, with the result that the "idle hands" are the more readily led into conduct which is likely to lead to their return to prison. There is also the fact that many of the former associates of these men who have been working in the country come to town on holiday, and, meeting again, renew associations which are against their best interests. The trouble experienced with these probationers released about holiday-time constrains me to bring this matter forward for the consideration of the members of the Prisons Board.

Reviewing the working of the probationary system for the past period, I feel justified in reiterating the remarks at the conclusion of my last annual report, to the effect that the small percentage of failures is gratifying, and that the results obtained augur well for the still further successful prosecution of the work under the Offenders Probation Act.

This report would not be complete without placing on record the very efficient services rendered by the Assistant Probation Officer and by the typist.

REV. FRANK RULE, PROBATION OFFICER, CHRISTCHURCH.

In submitting my annual report of the work done in the Christchurch district for the year ended 31st March, 1924, I desire to state that, like those that have preceded, the past year has been a busy one. Morning by morning at the Magistrate's Court time and energy are given in the effort to cause those who find themselves there to look upon life from a saner viewpoint. When the delinquent feels that no man cares for his welfare, that everybody henceforth will despise him, it is not easy to inspire him with the desire to shake off his obsession and make good. This is the section of the Probation Officer's work that calls for sympathy and the personal touch. Here the good of the 1920 Act is seen, in that numbers are assisted to grip themselves and go out to life's struggle with fresh courage. Probably the most gratifying part of our work in this city is the number who, long after their term has finished, continue to look to your officer for advice and friendly helpfulness. I am glad to report that only a very small percentage return to evil ways—I do not think more than 5 per cent.

The following will show the numbers dealt with since last annual report: Reporting at commencement of year, 74; admitted to probation during year, 45; transferred from other districts, 24; a gross total of 143. Twenty-nine completed their terms and were discharged; transferred to other districts, 22; defaulted, 8; convicted and sent to prison, 3; died, 1; remaining on reporting-list at end of year, 80.

REV. F. G. CUMMING, GENERAL PROBATION OFFICER, DUNEDIN.

The past year's work and results from every standpoint have been highly satisfactory. The number placed on probation has not quite reached the figures of last year, notwithstanding the fact that a large number of men have been given a chance of making good under the control of the Probation Officer, whilst not a few have been convicted to come up for sentence when called upon. From my long experience I am able to definitely state that the best results come from those who are admitted to definite terms of probation. It is very gratifying to me to be able to report to headquarters that many of those who completed their periods of probation made good and are now looked upon as very worthy citizens of this district. I further repeat with pleasure a paragraph in my last report, that quite a number of men, after their reporting-period has come to an end, still have a strong desire to keep in touch with the Probation Officer, seeking his counsel and advice in their future careers. This has been to me most encouraging, and it applies to both first offenders and those released on probation from institutions.

I feel it my duty to state that at this centre both His Honour Mr. Justice Sim and Mr. Bartholomew, S.M., and the latter's colleague, Mr. Bundle, S.M., give me every help and encouragement in what at times is a most difficult work. This also applies to the Court staff and police, who all do their utmost to assist the Probation Officer. Then there is another very valuable body that helps considerably—namely, the Patients' and Prisoners' Aid Society—which is indeed a strong auxiliary in the way of practical help. How truly may it be said that prejudices build a higher and