

fair day's work (which is looked upon as due to the State for his maintenance), allows him a bonus, as an incentive to produce as much more as he is able. It is found to work admirably, and, among other good effects, creates strong competitive feelings. For example, in the most laborious work of spauling the stones, the rivalry to attain the maximum credit at the end of the week is so keen that results in excess of the best free labour are obtained. It likewise provides an effectual means of punishment, for any misconduct can be visited with a forfeiture of the right to earn exertion money, as well as any already earned. Each man on task works by himself, and did the accommodation admit of it the "cellular" system would be adhered to.

We find that in Victoria the best class of prisoners become entitled, among other privileges, to a ration of tea and sugar, and a small quantity of tobacco, or its equivalent in money. As the chief aim of discipline here appears to be the inculcation of industrious habits by the hope of reward, and as we feel sure that good has flowed from it, we venture to suggest that, if this addition were also made, more may be expected.

It is surprising how little malingering or scheming exists, whether from fear of punishment, loss of marks, and consequent non-curtailment of sentence, or the prospect of its being shortened, with the reward in money added, must be a matter of opinion. But no doubt can exist that the work is well and cheerfully performed, and, instead of what has been termed "the Government stroke" being in existence, men who entered slothful have left, after having contracted industrious habits, with a little available means, and in most cases well fitted to earn their livelihood.

Annexed we append the amount of exertion money paid last year. It is scarcely necessary to point out the direct advantage derived by the Government, entirely apart from the benefits conferred on the prisoners. One case, however—that of broken metal—will clearly illustrate the working of the principle.

Ordinarily elsewhere the prisoner is placed to break the stone with the overseer as a check against idleness, and while he obtains the approbation of the officer in charge, being without other aim, it is only reasonable to suppose that the quantity broken, being of no concern to him, will be as small as possible.

Some gaol authorities anxious to present their institutions in the most favourable aspect as self-supporting, even if at the sacrifice of loftier ambitions, assess this description of work as being on a par with free labour irrespective of actual results, while at Mount Eden the prisoners among themselves look upon it as a matter of reproach to be unable to perform the task.

On the introduction of exertion money the metal-breakers were paid only 6d. per yard. The sum was found in practice to be insufficient to stimulate many to accomplish more than the allotted task. Now, however, that 10d. is paid the production has largely increased. It appears to indicate clearly that the bait must be tangible before the prisoner will be tempted to strive for it.

The profit to the public consists not only in the 3s. 4d., gain on each yard of metal, but in creating and maintaining the prisoner in such a condition that on leaving he will not find it irksome to earn his livelihood.

At present the convict is entitled to his benefit out of the transaction by payment in cash at the time of his release; but we think that where he has a family the option might be allowed him to have it paid to them from time to time. It is also worthy of consideration whether the exertion money might not, in both cases, commence immediately on entering.

In the general administration there is great need for some active power. It cannot be expected that the Minister of the department could undertake this duty. In the past if it formed part of the duty of the Visiting Justices, they either have not been aware of it, or have utterly neglected it. We recommend the appointment of a Board of (say) five persons, with well-defined powers, subject to the veto of the Minister. No difficulty ought to be experienced in obtaining gratuitous services for carrying out such an important work. Doubtless gentlemen holding Her Majesty's Commission of the Peace would not consider the task irksome were the duty imposed on them; and from such a Board might spring an institution, sadly required here, which has been productive of incalculable good in Victoria—namely, a "Prisoners' Aid Society." Indeed without this adjunct much good, which the system is calculated to work, will, in all probability, be neutralized, if not lost; whereas by extending a kind helping hand to a prisoner whose conduct has merited it, a chance is afforded him to retrieve his lost position after leaving gaol. We misjudge this community much if there are not very many competent persons who, if the need were pointed out to them, would cheerfully devote the time required for such a laudable purpose.

The marked absence of efforts for the mental improvement of prisoners is a blot on the institution. We think a library could be instituted with advantage.

It is useless for us to make reference to classification so far as regards the present buildings, with only one common yard for all hard-labour men. It appears to us necessary, under the existing circumstances, to strongly urge the Government to take steps to provide additional cells near the Police Court, where all sentences under a week could be served. The labour derived from such is small, and the effect on the discipline is bad, for known cases have arisen where parties obtained incarceration for the purpose of communicating with their friends within. Furthermore, it is most desirable in numerous cases that first convictions should not be brought into contact with old offenders. In addition, we recommend that strong deterrent measures be adopted to this most numerous class, which may be characterized as the hotbed of criminals. The first punishment in the career ought to be made as distasteful as possible; whereas at present, beyond the loss of liberty, there is little to cause unpleasant recollections.

*Ration Returns.*—We notice that in Victoria 20 ounces of bread for males and 12 ounces for females are allowed. Although the saving of 4 ounces respectively would be considerable, we hesitate to do more than call attention to the fact; but we would particularly suggest that some punitive measures in short-sentence cases be adopted at once, similar to those in Victoria, herewith forwarded for information. We cannot but deplore the existence of the present scale, and trust that it will be remedied immediately.