

475. *Hon. Mr. Fox.*] Are complaints numerous?—Very rare indeed.

476. *The Chairman.*] Do you think they have cause of complaint?—No, I do not think they have any cause of complaint.

*Mr. Pearce.*

15th Aug., 1878.

477. *Hon. Mr. Fox.*] The Visiting Justices are, of course, not paid?—No, the office is honorary. There is one point I would like to mention—namely, that I think there ought to be regulations which would be better understood both by the Visiting Justices and the prisoners themselves. There ought to be some small assistance given to prisoners when they come out of gaol. It constantly happens that men coming out of gaol come to me and tell me that they have not a penny in the world. I do not think it is right that a man should be sent out of gaol without a farthing. They have to find lodgings, and to wait until they get employment. There ought to be some machinery by which a prisoner would receive pecuniary aid on coming out of gaol.

478. Do you mean earnings by marks?—That might be a good system; but if a prisoner were unable to earn marks it would, even in that case, be necessary to provide some means.

479. *Hon. Mr. Fox.*] You would not think it would be judicious to give the prisoners money, because a large number of discharged prisoners would spend it in publichouses?—What is a man to do when he comes out of gaol without a farthing in his pocket. The greater the criminal the greater the necessity to keep him out of temptation. When I have been asked for a few shillings, and see that the men speak the truth, as they generally do in such cases, I have always given it.

480. Do you mean as a private gratuity?—Yes, there is no other means. In former years, when it was a larger sum than a few shillings, I have written a note to the Provincial Treasurer, stating the case, and requesting him to furnish a sufficient sum to enable the man to go up-country or to some other province, so as to enable him to get employment or to join his friends. But since the abolition of the provincial system there have been no means to get funds for the purpose. It is cruel to send a man out of gaol without a farthing in his pocket.

*The Chairman.*] I have had experience as a Resident Magistrate, and have frequently been asked for money, and I have found it necessary.

*Hon. Mr. Fox.*] Judges and other authorities tell us that something like 75 per cent of the men who are sent to gaol go there through drink, and nine out of ten of the men who come out of gaol relapse into crime again. To put money into their hands would be placing temptation in their way. If the Government would offer them employment on public works there would be some sense in it.

481. *The Chairman.*] Would you prefer aid being given to them through a Prisoners' Aid Society, without the money being placed absolutely at their disposal?—No; I do not think so. I think the men should be provided with sufficient means to provide for themselves for a day or two after they come out of gaol. No one would suggest that they should be sent out of gaol without clothes; but they often come in with such clothes as are unfit to wear when they go out, and thus they are given clothes. I think that in the same way they should be provided with a little money.

482. What is your opinion as to the manner in which the money should be apportioned? You are aware of the English system by which prisoners earn a certain sum on marks, and they thus earn a limited amount?—That does not meet the case that I have pointed out, because if a man does not earn marks there is no reason why he should be thrust on the streets without the means of providing himself with the necessities of life.

483. Do you think it would be advisable that the amount of money given to prisoners should depend upon their conduct in gaol?—No; I do not think so. Whatever a man's conduct may have been in gaol, when his term of imprisonment is completed he ought to have something.

484. We are informed that there is no difficulty in Wellington for a prisoner to obtain work on his discharge. Is that your opinion?—I believe they have no difficulty in obtaining work after they have had time to look round. A man discharged in the morning cannot, perhaps, get work that day.

485. *The Chairman.*] The Gaoler tells us of an instance where he let a man out of gaol in the morning and he came up with a load of wood as a drayman in the afternoon. Then, practically, at present a prisoner is dependent on whatever may be charitably given by the Visiting Justices?—Yes; but the applications are not very frequent.

486. But has the Gaoler no funds at his disposal for the prisoners?—None whatever.

487. There is no such organization here in the shape of a Prisoners' Aid Society?—No. The percentage of men requiring money is small; but still it is not right any man should come out of gaol without having some means to provide for himself. The majority of prisoners have friends in the place; but still there are cases where they have not.

488. *Mr. Seymour.*] You think it ought to be in the power of the Visiting Justices to order money for them?—I think so.

489. *The Chairman.*] You would leave it in the discretion of the Visiting Justices?—Yes; the Gaoler might be instructed, whenever a prisoner was discharged, to give him a note to the Visiting Justices, stating the circumstances of his discharge; that is to say, whether the prisoner has money of his own. The practice is that money is taken from prisoners which may be in their possession when they go into gaol, and it is returned when they come out. If the Gaoler certified that a prisoner went out without money it should be in the power of the Visiting Justices to give him some.

490. Do you think prisoners could be profitably employed in improving and enlarging the gaol?—If there happened to be carpenters in the gaol at the time.

491. Do they use concrete and solid material?—They have been employed in making bricks, and have become very apt in that.

492. In some parts of the colony they are employed in that way. I suppose there are always a fair percentage of carpenters and other men of skilled trades in the gaol?—I think it is very rarely that mechanics are convicted. The system of having a school at night works very well indeed. The men like it because it keeps them employed. I have seen some prisoners who in a short time had learnt to write remarkably well who went into gaol unable to write at all.

493. There is no provision for a school on the women's side?—No.