

greater amount of work would certainly have been done. There is no reason to regret the experiment was tried; and had more prisoners been sent, and the same class of work as was first intended continued, the prisoners would ultimately have rendered a good account of themselves, and there can be no question as to the work fitting them to earn their living on discharge, a consideration of no small moment.

24. In Auckland another wing of the new prison is fast approaching completion, and should be ready for occupation in the spring, while in Wellington, as soon as the cook-house is finished, and the drainage- and gas-pipes laid down, the building should be ready for occupation. There is then only Dunedin prison to be rebuilt, and I have no hesitation in saying that this work should be commenced at once. This prison, which has been for many years a relic of the dark ages, is unfit for occupation; and though the reduced number of prisoners require a much smaller building than would have sufficed some years back, still a small prison should now be started; and, as it is so urgently required, I am of opinion that, at any rate, the first wing should, to save time, be built by contract, and additions might afterwards be made with prison labour. This is really now the only pressing work in connection with prison-accommodation, but it should no longer be neglected.

FIRST OFFENDERS' PROBATION ACT.

As before stated, this Act continues to work exceedingly smoothly and well, though there is a slight falling-off in the numbers placed under it during the past year. A reference to Table shows that 72 persons came under its operation this year as against 93 in the preceding year. Of these 30 satisfactorily carried out the conditions of their licenses and were discharged, 3 were rearrested and committed to prison, 1 absconded—leaving 38 still under the supervision of the Probation Officers, completing their terms.

The amount of costs ordered to be paid by the various Courts before which these 72 offenders were brought was £179 11s., of which sum £81 13s. 6d. has been actually paid into the Probation Officers' hands, while the remainder, the greater part of which is not yet due, is being paid by instalments. The approximate cost of keeping these offenders in prison, had not the Probation Act been in force, would have been about £1,660, which, if added to the amount of costs actually paid, gives a saving of £1,741 13s. 6d. Since the Act came into force, in October, 1886, 448 persons have been placed on probation, of whom 361 were discharged after having satisfactorily completed the terms of their licenses, 21 were rearrested and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment, 2 died, 7 managed to elude the vigilance of the Probation Officers and absconded, while 56 remain still on probation. I must again commend the probation officers for their zeal, tact, and intelligence in dealing with this Act, and though I know in some cases pressure has been brought to bear, they have invariably conscientiously and fearlessly made their recommendations, which have in almost every case been accepted and acted upon by the Court. As regards the working of this Act in England and Wales, the following circular, published in a recent issue of the *Law Times*, gives some interesting details:—

First Offenders.

The following circular has been issued by the Home Secretary to Magistrates in England and Wales:—

“The Summary Jurisdiction Act, 1879” (42 & 43 Vict. c. 49). “The Probation of First Offenders Act, 1887” (50 & 51 Vict. c. 25).

“Sir,—

“Home Office, Whitehall, 25th April, 1892.

“I am directed by the Secretary of State to acquaint you that from the information before him he has reason to believe that the provisions in the enactments cited in the margin are not so fully taken advantage of as they might be in the case of persons charged with offences of a trifling nature, or persons against whom no previous conviction has been proved. A return laid before Parliament in May, 1891, of the cases in which the Probation of First Offenders Act had been applied in the Metropolitan Police Districts and in five large provincial districts showed that of the total number (2,530) of persons dealt with under the Act during the three years 1888–90 only 169, or 6·6 per cent., had been called upon to appear and receive judgment, or were known to the police to have been subsequently convicted of a fresh offence. It would appear, however, that the provisions in question are much more frequently applied in some districts and by some benches of Magistrates than by others, and the Secretary of State has therefore thought it right to issue this circular, in the hope that it may lead to a general use of these enactments by Courts of summary jurisdiction, and of the Probation of First Offenders Act by Courts of Quarter Sessions, in cases where such course would be justified by the character of the offence, the youth of the offender, or other circumstances.

“I am, &c.,

“GODFREY LUSHINGTON.”

Now, in New Zealand the number of those called upon to appear and receive judgment, or who are known to the police to have been subsequently convicted of a fresh offence, since the commencement of the Act is only 21, or 4·68 per cent., while we have no cause for complaint that the Benches do not take advantage of the Act.

I am, &c.,

A. HUME, Inspector of Prisons.