

intelligent classification and separation of the different types of offenders, should be beneficial in its ultimate results, there is a still greater need for concentration on the work of prevention. With this object in view it is essential that the scope of the First Offenders' Probation Act should be considerably widened in order that its benefits may be applied to a larger class of offenders. In cases that are considered suitable by the Courts a far wider discretion should be allowed, even to the extent of removing the present restriction in its application to first offenders only. This is particularly so in regard to young people of both sexes. A committal to prison should be looked upon as a drastic measure that should only be adopted as a last resource when all attempts at rehabilitation by other methods have failed. A well-established, well-organized probation system is morally and economically sounder and more logical than the best prison system that was ever devised, alike in the interest of the State and of the individual. It may be thought in certain quarters that any considerable extension of the probation system would result in the loss of the deterrent effect of punishment for offences against the law, but this is a fallacy. The Courts have the power to direct a period of probation exceeding in length the term of any probable sentence that might be inflicted, and the conditions imposed are sufficiently restrictive to make the offender realize more fully the effect of his act than if he were locked up for a shorter period with a number of other prisoners. When on probation he is moving about and living among the community against whom he has offended under conditions that differentiate him from his fellows. In such circumstances he is more likely to feel his position than if in confinement with a number of other offenders, who are on the same footing as himself and are treated in exactly the same way.

FIRST OFFENDERS' PROBATION ACT.

In order that the work that is now being carried on under the provisions of the First Offenders' Probation Act may be more fully understood and appreciated, space has been found in the current year's report for substantial extracts from the reports of the five gentlemen who have been appointed during the past two years to act as Probation Officers in the chief centres. The information contained in each extract is interesting and instructive, and the observations and recommendations contained therein should be of assistance to the Minister in building up an improved system of probation.

From the remarks of the individual Probation Officers it is evident that there should be a linking-up between the first-offender-probation system and the work that is now being initiated by you in your capacity as Minister of Education in regard to the more juvenile members of the community who come more immediately under the jurisdiction of the officers of the Education Department. It is hoped that with adequate co-operation between the officers of both Departments satisfactory results will accrue.

The returns received from the different Probation Officers throughout the Dominion show that 125 persons were placed on probation in 1916, compared with ninety-three in 1915. Of those released upon probation, twenty-one have now completed their terms without relapse.

The total sum ordered to be paid by the Courts towards the cost of prosecutions amounted to £287 10s. 1d. The amount collected was £228 8s. 6d.

I have, &c.,

C. E. MATTHEWS,

Inspector of Prisons.

EXTRACTS FROM GAOLERS' REPORTS FOR 1916.

ADDINGTON PRISON FOR WOMEN.

There were 31 prisoners remaining in custody on the 1st January, 1916. Received during the year, 141; greatest number in custody at one time, 47; lowest, 30. One woman was admitted six times during the year, 2 five times, 4 four times, and 4 three times.

The daily average on the sick-list was 0.16.

The conduct of the majority of the prisoners has been very good on the whole; the prison offences have been committed mostly by the old and incorrigible offenders.

The vegetable and flower gardens have afforded healthy and suitable employment for a great number of the women, the remainder being employed with laundry-work, cooking, cleaning, and sewing.

Apart from the Prison sewing, a great deal of good work has been done for the Red Cross City Branch. I enclose a list of work done during the past year, and it is a very convincing proof of the usefulness of some of these women if their energies are directed in the right channel. The list of items manufactured for the Red Cross Society is as follows: 440 pairs pyjamas, 316 underpants, 130 vests, 12 nightshirts, 6 bed-jackets, 34 dressing-gowns, 270 pairs socks, 30 mattress-covers, 3,211 handkerchiefs, 427 slings, 120 bottle-covers, 36 draw-sheets, 114 knitted face-washers, 37 treasure-bags, 12 tea-towels, 36 pillow-slips, 24 dusters, 144 bandages.

An association cell has been turned into a surgery, and fitted up suitably for the examination of prisoners. Electric light has been installed in the corridors, offices, and the staff rooms. A new laundry, with bathrooms, &c., is being built, and will be finished shortly.

Lectures on suitable subjects have been given frequently since June by Miss Hunt and Miss Hawley, both Official Visitors.

Divine service has been held on Sundays by the Rev. Canon Bean, Mr. Smail, and the Salvation Army for Protestants, and by members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society for Roman Catholics.