

have made free use of this and have placed girls there who require discipline before placing them out in situations. To Mrs. Drew, the Matron, her staff, and the authorities of this institution I wish to record my gratitude.

Crimes Amendment Probationers: On the decease of Mr. Brakenrig in September, 1918, I took over this branch of work also, and have had an average of forty probationers under my care. This work would have been quite impossible without assistance, and so the Department sent me a clerk from Head Office in December last. The assistance thus given has been of inestimable value to me. During the six months that I have carried on this branch of work I have paid out to probationers about £225 on account of prison gratuities and earnings. These payments are made by voucher in small amounts only, the Probation Officer acting as trustee of prisoners' earnings in order to safeguard against any tendency to squander.

Informal Probationers: During the year I have had quite a number of these cases under my care, and with few exceptions they have been most satisfactory.

With the three classes of probationers, averaging never less than 150 a month, my hands have been pretty full, but no effort that can be made to help young men and women make good the mistakes of the past is labour lost.

My business is so arranged that it is almost impossible for young offenders to come in contact with old offenders. Separate days are allocated for various classes of probationers to report, and thus they are kept quite apart. Most of my probationers report weekly, and it is a common thing on report days to have from fifty to seventy reports. The weekly report is of greater value than the statutory monthly report. A large amount of correspondence is done in keeping in close touch with probationers who have been placed in positions in country districts. Some hundreds of letters have been written in this connection.

Finally, I would like to refer to the most promising feature of my work as general Probation Officer for the district. During the year quite a number of parents and relatives have come to me for help in the case of young folk who were beginning to go astray, and many of these have been handed over to my care privately, and thus prevented from going any further in wrongdoing and getting into the clutches of the law. I have invariably found that in all departments of social work efforts to prevent wrongdoing are far more effective than efforts to reform the wrongdoer.

REV. FRANK RULE, CHRISTCHURCH.

During the year ending 31st March, 1919, the work of the Probation Officer under the First Offenders Act, 1908, has continued to supply a real need in our Courts. The increasing number of first offenders who are thus saved from the not pleasant experience of spending a longer or shorter time among criminals and becoming familiarized with the inside of penal institutions is surely a matter for thankfulness. If in this way only a few are prevented from embarking on a life of crime, then all the labour is worth while. During the year our Magistrates have made considerable use of the system of "informal probation," and both men and women have been enabled to turn a dangerous corner to where their attempts to recover themselves are both fostered and encouraged. It is gratifying to see the number who, having made a slip, are thus enabled to recover themselves. During the year fifty have been on probation, reporting regularly; fourteen of these have been ordinary probationers and twenty-six informal. Six have been transferred to other districts, three have completed their terms and been discharged, while one has been sent to an inebriate institution, leaving forty on our books.

MR. F. G. CUMMING, DUNEDIN.

The past year has been a most successful one, both with regard to the ordinary Court work and the real work of the Probation Officer. During the year quite a large number of young people—men and women—have been placed upon probation, and with one or two exceptions have done well and are making good. In this way they are proving that the Judge or Magistrate was fully justified in giving them the chance recommended by the Probation Officer.

At the present time I have upon my books something like twenty-two probationers, the majority of whom are first offenders, and the balance those who have been released upon probation by the Prisons Board. From the latter class I have very little trouble; indeed, it is a pleasure to help these men, because there is distinctly seen in them an earnest desire to as far as possible have the past cleaned up and forgotten. I think the Prison Board and the Department are to be highly commended for the magnificent work done and the trouble they take in dealing with this class of criminal. It will be highly gratifying to them to know from those who handle and help these men and women that in most cases a real and true reformation takes place and that they become law-abiding citizens.

It is pleasing to report that at this centre the Probation Officer has the greatest possible assistance from Judges, Magistrates, and police. No young man or woman's case is hurriedly dealt with; the Probation Officer is always consulted, and every chance is given him to make a recommendation. I am grateful to these gentlemen for the opportunities given, and by which I am led to believe that the work done by the Probation Officer is at least satisfactory to them.

Quite a large amount of money has been collected during the year on behalf of the Department. One probationer has refunded just on £150, so you will gather that if such a person had been sent to prison the State would not only have been put to the expense of keeping the individual, but the amount repaid would not have been forthcoming. I state frankly that the getting of the amounts due by these people is not difficult; indeed, the probationer who wants to do the right thing is most anxious to meet the claims made upon him.