

by idleness during the week-end was a matter for real concern. This anxiety can readily be understood when numbers of these men are victims of drink and laziness. I placed the whole matter before the resident Judge, and he readily grasped the difficulty, and agreed that in future there should be a regular sentencing-day in the middle of the week, when all prisoners who had pleaded guilty in the Lower Court could be dealt with. Thus it came about that every second Wednesday at 10 a.m. the sentencing of prisoners takes precedence over all other business.

The Offenders Probation Act, 1920, provides that all reports must be in writing; and, while this entails more work, it is more satisfactory than the method I had hitherto adopted of making verbal reports in Court. In order to facilitate the business of the Court I have consistently provided the Crown Solicitor with a copy of the report submitted to the Judge. My purpose in drawing attention to the large number of prisoners dealt with is to emphasize the importance of and responsibility attaching to the Probation Officer's report. Obviously Judges require all the help they can get in dealing with the difficult problems of complex frailties of human nature. Those only who are familiar with Court work can have even a small conception of a Judge's difficult and responsible duty in sentencing prisoners. Naturally, and quite properly, counsel for the defence do all that is possible to secure as lenient treatment as possible for their clients and urge everything possible in mitigation of an offence. On the other hand, and just as naturally, the police want the criminal who has caused them endless trouble, and society great loss, to receive sufficient deterring discipline to bring him to his senses. Thus it comes about that the Probation Officer's duty is analogous to that of an arbitrator, and his report must be an absolutely impartial statement.

Before sentencing-day your officer is often inundated with relatives and friends of accused persons. Experience has taught that the greatest possible use can be made of the numerous representations that are thus made. Careful sifting of facts from various sources is often the best index of the character of an accused person. It often happens that a report containing a recommendation in a few short sentences is the outcome of much careful observation and analysing. In this work I am greatly indebted to the constant and unfailing courtesy and assistance of responsible police officials. I rarely report on a case without first discussing it with the detective in charge. It is a common thing to hear "the man in the street" cruelly malign the police as persecutors of the men who have been in trouble. The general public would be greatly surprised if it but knew how often the same maligned officials go out of their way to do a good turn for the family of the man their duty has caused them to bring to justice. Repeatedly I have been rung up and communicated with by the police asking me to help some family whose breadwinner has been arrested.

This may appear to be a digression from my report, but I take the liberty of its insertion as it is my last report. The knowledge that except on rare occasions the Judges largely act upon the Probation Officer's recommendations greatly increases the responsibility of the officer's work. At times one gives offence and disappointment to relatives and friends in not being able to see the case from their viewpoint and recommending severe sentences rather than lenient treatment. It is safe to say that 90 per cent. of our delinquents are the direct result of insufficient home training and parental control. Most of our criminals are to be pitied rather than blamed, and deserve all the sympathy and help that can be extended to them: they are so heavily handicapped in life through false friendships and lack of their birthright—a good home and good early training. To extend this sympathy and help one must of necessity often appear hard and stern in order to be kind. The greater the disease the more serious is the operation to effect the cure. On frequent occasions I have been gratefully thanked by prisoners and relatives for having recommended stern discipline that has meant the salvation and reinstatement of the accused.

*Prison Probationers* (released from prison on recommendation of Prisons Board).—In common with other districts, I find that this is the most distressing part of the work. Close contact with criminals for a number of years forces the conclusion upon me that, notwithstanding the noteworthy reforms of our prison system within recent years, much yet remains to be done. Dealing with delinquents who have not been under general prison influence and who are free from prison stigma is very different from dealing with men who have long prison associations. Reformatory detention in the actual reformatory institutions at Waikeria and the Borstal Institution at Invercargill is a very real and vital thing, but the same influences cannot be brought to bear in the central penal institutions. These facts are patent by observation of the results coming from the different institutions. Holding these facts in mind, one cannot expect anything like such good results as in the case of Court probationers. Yet, on the other hand, considering all the difficulties, the results are most encouraging. The following are the number of these cases dealt with during the year: April, 35; May, 38; June, 42; July, 38; August, 41; September, 39; October, 34; November, 36; December, 44; January, 54; February, 61; March, 60.

Payments from prison earnings and gratuities were made to these licensed prisoners as follows: April, £45 6s.; May, £16 10s.; June, £25; July, £32 9s. 6d.; August, £60 12s. 7½d.; September, £31 17s. 3d.; October, £60 1s. 9d.; November, £13 17s. 9d.; December, £7 14s. 11d.; January, £51 4s. 4d.; February, £55 4s.; March, £71 14s. 10d. These payments are made in small sums to meet the need for food, clothing, &c. The careful distribution of this money often causes complaints by the probationers, who would quickly squander it if it were not shepherded, and occasionally there is interference from outside persons whom probationers have enlisted to help them get more money. Such interference always gets the short shrift it deserves.

*General Remarks.*—Owing to the great growth in the work of the association of which I am Superintendent I have found it necessary to resign from probation work, and regret the necessity of severing my connection with this branch of social service on the 30th June next. More conscientious and faithful help than my assistants have given me could not be desired, and I thank them warmly for all their help and co-operation.