

age, and in consequence had already spent some years in a State institution. He again gravitated into his wonted associations and became uncontrollable, so that there was no alternative but to have him sent where he would be under strict discipline. When, however, it can be affirmed that only 6 per cent. have turned out failures, the justification of the probation system is notably upheld.

It has become the practice of the Courts in nearly all cases where a person has defrauded another to insist that full restitution be made during the period of probation. The wisdom of adopting such a course is shown in the following example: A young woman was ordered to make restitution of a sum which to her was of some magnitude. The obligation thus imposed upon her, besides its practical lesson of insistence on righting the wrong, proved indirectly a factor in restoring her to normal status in the community. In order to discharge the debt at the earliest possible date she supplemented her weekly wages by what could be earned from needlework done in spare moments. By this means full restitution was made about six months before the due date. The stimulus of returning self-respect quickened her endeavours to make a stepping-stone of the past; other interests came into her life binding her more strongly to her better purposes; she is now happily settled in a home of her own. In this instance at any rate there is good promise that the humane provision which spared the ignominy of incarceration has retrieved the after-career from what might otherwise have been a downward course. In another instance a young man was given the opportunity of redeeming himself from the consequences of a false step, and the results so far are gratifying indeed. Before he could be properly placed a good deal of time and effort had to be expended to that purpose. The desired opportunity came at last, and to-day this young man fills with credit a position commensurate with his marked abilities. He, too, is in hopeful accord with that part of his treatment which insists that he contribute a substantial portion of his earnings to restore what was not his own. It is a minor consideration, but not to be overlooked, that the injured party could not have been repaid had imprisonment been given.

In these days, when so much attention is directed to the intellectual and moral interests of the rising generation, the contributing causes which lead a certain percentage of young people into misdeemeanour and crime are worth tracing with a view to removing such causes if that should be practicable.

*Crimes Amendment Act Probationers.*—In this category a different type of offender presents a more difficult problem to whatever agency undertakes to foster reform efforts. Delinquency has gone further than in the previous class; there is a worse bondage to the habits and propensities that have led to law-breaking. The delinquent, just released from penal detention and resolving to redeem himself, has a long, stern conflict to maintain not only with his own insidious atavistic tendencies, which will continue to dog his steps, but also with external discouragements. A helpful humanitarian attitude towards the erring brother-man will not meet him on every hand; unhappily, some real ostracism will test his will and his purpose. But that hindrance is apt to be magnified by his own self-conscious thoughts of the slur he bears: he is unduly apprehensive of mistrust and of obstinate antipathy on the part of the people amongst whom he is supposed to be given a chance to re-create his character and his reputation.

In view of these hindering conditions it is gratifying to be able to report favourably. Very satisfactory indeed has been the conduct of those who, by the good record maintained while under institutional discipline, have merited an opportunity being given by the Prisons Board of regaining their personal liberty, the deprivation of which, even for a brief period, is dire punishment for the average human being.

There is a class of probationer whose case calls for special remark: I refer to those delinquents who, for excellent reasons, have to be denied release by the Prisons Board until the maximum sentence has almost expired. The term during which these remain under supervision is too brief to be of effect; they receive full liberty before they have given practical evidence that they are fitted to exercise its privileges. To illustrate the point, a case may be instanced in which the probation period covered only a few months. The individual referred to was at first by no means amenable, and took some time to settle down to duty and a regularly ordained life. Eventually, however, the role of a willing worker was apparently cheerfully accepted, and the employer's testimony was so definitely favourable that success seemed to have been obtained. But, one week before expiry of the term of probation, the willing worker became indolent and insolent, finally giving the employer notice to quit at the end of the week, and adding the significant remark, "I can then do as I like." To meet the needs of such cases, provision might be made to extend the period of probation beyond the date of expiry of the original sentence passed by the Court.

The indeterminate principle might, indeed, be generally applied to advantage. For, while a certain minimum duration of probation would be necessary to be of any avail, it is difficult to predetermine the needs of each case. There are those who respond to the efforts made on their behalf and who gladly keep in touch with the Probation Officer, conscious that their improving record will commend itself. For some of these earlier release from official supervision might be decreed, it being still open to them to seek advice and friendly offices in case of need. There are others less promising in their whole attitude, less dependable in their will to reform. It would appear desirable that these should be subject to repeated extensions of their probation at the discretion of the Board, acting upon reports furnished. There is no doubt that authoritative supervision affords support that may turn the issue where, owing to slackness of will and the pressure of inveterate habits, the risk of relapse is imminent.

#### REV. O. BLUNDELL, NEW PLYMOUTH.

I have the honour to report that twenty-two probationers have been under my charge during the year. Of these, four completed their term of probation, nine were transferred to other districts, two broke the terms of their probation and are undergoing periods of imprisonment, one died in hospital, and six are still reporting themselves to me.

Generally speaking, there is a manifest desire on the part of those who have been under my charge to make the best use of the opportunity afforded them, and I am very hopeful, in the case of most, that they will continue to act as reputable citizens.