

The habitual criminals who have been granted probation under the same Act are, of course, of a different class, but even with this class of hardened criminal—all of whom have had many terms of imprisonment, sometimes extending over half a lifetime—the probation system has resulted in the rehabilitation of approximately 20 per cent. of those who have been released. Without the chance that the system gives them, by far the larger proportion of those who have now become useful and self-respecting members of the community would have continued their criminal careers until death claimed them.

The results in respect of young persons released by the Board since the coming into operation of the Prevention of Crime Act, 1924, compare more than favourably with those of Great Britain. Of the 1,753 young persons released, 291, or approximately 16 per cent., have been reconvicted for offences committed after discharge or on expiry of their period on probation, and approximately 10 per cent. have been recalled for failing to comply with the terms of their probation.

The Board on a former occasion indicated that there is a particular class of offender who merits special attention. It alludes to the vagrants and petty criminals who have a large number of convictions recorded against them. They are continually going in and out of gaol and serving short sentences, and section 30, subsection (1), of the Crimes Act, 1908, is rarely applied to them.

By arrangement with the Mental Hospitals Department, the Board in all cases where such a course is considered expedient obtains reports from specialists concerning the mental condition of persons who appear before it.

During the year the Board visited all the prisons and prison institutions in the Dominion, and has to express its satisfaction at the continued progress made by the Department in advancing its various undertakings and in improving from year to year the facilities that are provided for the rehabilitation of the persons under its charge, especially at the three Borstal institutions and the prison farms. The Board is appreciative of the assistance rendered by the many citizens who help in connection with the after-care of prisoners, both by way of finding employment and in assisting generally in their rehabilitation in the community.

Since the Board commenced to function in 1911, no less than 22,196 cases have been considered by it. This includes prisoners undergoing sentences of reformatory detention, hard labour, habitual criminals, Borstal inmates, and probationers for discharge from probation or variation of terms thereof. Dealing with these cases under their particular headings the results have been as follow :—

REFORMATIVE DETENTION.

During the period from January, 1911, to December, 1934, 4,631 prisoners were sentenced to reformatory detention under the provisions of the Crimes Amendment Act, 1910. The number of cases that have been recommended for release or discharge is 3,513. In 615 cases prisoners were required to serve the full sentence imposed by the Court. Of the total number released after undergoing reformatory detention, 26·6 per cent. have been returned to prison either for non-compliance with the conditions of the release or for committing further offences; 2·76 per cent. left the Dominion or absconded; 0·53 per cent. died or were transferred to mental hospitals; leaving 70·11 per cent. who have not further offended, and who may therefore reasonably be assumed to have become useful and law-abiding members of the community.

HARD LABOUR.

Since the passing of the Statute Law Amendment Act, 1917, which extended the scope of the Prisons Board to the consideration of cases of prisoners sentenced to terms of imprisonment involving hard labour, 4,525 cases have been considered by the Board up to December, 1934. In 1,762 cases the prisoners were released on probation or discharged prior to expiry of the full time on the recommendation of the Board. Of this number, 937 completed probation satisfactorily, 102 were recommitted for other offences, and 52 were still reporting on probation at the 31st December, 1934.

HABITUAL CRIMINALS.

During the period from January, 1911, to December, 1934, 525 habitual criminals were released on license on the recommendation of the Prisons Board. Of those so released 56·0 per cent. were returned to prison either for non-compliance with the conditions of probation or for committing further offences. No offences are recorded against the remaining 44 per cent., and, allowing for those who have died or left the Dominion, this leaves 20·19 per cent. who remain in the Dominion and have not further offended.

BORSTAL CASES.

Since the coming into operation of the Prevention of Crime Act, 1924, 2,041 young persons have been detained under this Act, either by transference of youthful offenders from penal institutions or industrial schools, or by original commitments by the Court. There have been 1,753 inmates released on the recommendation of the Board, 1,601 being on probation and 152 on the expiration of their sentence. Of the total number released, 26 have been returned to the institution for non-compliance with the conditions of release, 152 were recommitted for further offences whilst on probation, and 291, or approximately 16 per cent. of the total released, have been sentenced for offences committed after discharge or on expiry of their period of probation.

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