

live with worse." The frequent consequence is that, when their sentence expires, and they are released from prison, they are at war with society and society is at war with them. It is not for a moment argued that reformation is the only thing to be considered in dealing with crime; but I think it will be generally admitted that it is fast becoming the most important question. Retaliation, which seems to have been the origin of punishment, has virtually been eliminated from civilized notions, at all events in theory: we now punish to protect society. But is not reformation the strongest protection? Society has one less to guard against and one less to support.

2. To a young, vigorous community like ours it is a subject of the most momentous import that the country should be saved from the social cancer of a criminal class, and is worth every possible experiment. A criminal class means also a pauper class.

3. It may also be asserted of the probation system that it has passed out of the region of experiment now, since it has been tried with such great success in America. The New Zealand First Offenders' Probation Act was passed last session, and virtually came into operation on the 1st October last, and the first difficulty that presented itself was how suitable Probation Officers were to be obtained. As, however, it was decided that no salary could be granted for the performance of these duties, the choice lay between the Gaolers and the police-officers; but, as the police are administered under another department, and as the Probation Act had been thought out and introduced by yourself, it was only reasonable to conclude it would be more successfully worked out by those serving in a department immediately under your own administration. Hence, at those places where prisons exist the Gaolers were selected for Probation Officers, while in other localities these duties have been assigned to the senior officer of the local police force.

4. For the three months, ending the 31st December, 1886, during which the Act has been in force, 18 persons (see Table L) were placed on probation, and have in every instance satisfactorily carried out the conditions of their license by reporting themselves at the stipulated periods, and paying by instalments such part of the costs of their prosecutions as were directed by the Court.

5. The total amount paid by these 18 persons is £56, and the probable cost of their imprisonment, had not probation intervened, amounts to about £375, thus giving a saving of about £431 for the three months. Of these 18 persons the terms of probation to be served vary from two years to as little as three months.

6. As far as can at present be ascertained, there is every reason to believe that in the cases of these 18 persons reformation may be expected without imprisonment, and the best interests of the public, as well as of the offenders, have been subserved by placing them on probation.

7. It cannot for a moment be expected that in future, as the operations of the Act extend, so large a percentage of reformants can reasonably be reckoned upon; but a word of praise is due to the Probation Officers for the discrimination shown by them in prosecuting the necessary inquiries, and the selection of those recommended to be brought under the provisions of the Act.

8. There are several matters of detail in the working of the Act which may, no doubt, have to be amended when, with more experience, the faults have been detected. And some difficulty has presented itself in those districts where Gaolers are Probation Officers, by their not being immediately informed of the arrest of a person by the police against whose character nothing is previously known; but, doubtless, as time goes on such difficulties will be easily surmounted. In places where the police are Probation Officers it has been ruled by their department that in forwarding reports on probationers to this office they must be submitted through the inspector in charge of the district, instead of direct; which appears to me a grave error, and most unfair to the persons reported upon, by giving unnecessary publicity to their previous history and character, which I believe was never contemplated by the Act.

I have, &c.,

A. HUME,

Inspector of Prisons.