

23. I am extremely pleased to report that at the three centres of population and at Lyttelton the prisoners have been employed for some time past at the fortification-work, and have given satisfaction to the Defence Engineer; but of this, doubtless, he will report anon. The barracks at Tairaroa Heads, Halswell, Wellington, and Fort Cautley, Auckland, have been converted at a nominal cost into temporary prisons, and fifty men have been as a rule kept at each of these places for fortification-work. It is intended shortly to make Ripa Island, at Lyttelton, a temporary prison, instead of taking the prisoners backwards and forwards daily by steam-launch. This work is most suitable for prisoners, and I venture to think that had it been undertaken from the first by prison-labour the works would now be in a more advanced state, and a great many thousands of pounds would have been saved to the taxpayer.

24. I cannot close this report without making a few comments on two subjects which appear to be exercising the minds of philanthropic people at present, and to which I invariably draw attention annually in these reports, but, I regret to say, hitherto with but little success—viz., the treatment of drunkards, and our system of dealing with juvenile offenders. I have long since come to the conclusion that our so-called system of the treatment of drunkenness is nothing more nor less than a sham and a delusion, the outcome of short-sightedness and folly. The sooner it is realised that drunkenness is a disease requiring conscientious and judicious medical treatment, instead of a crime, the sooner may be looked for some real and beneficial results. That inebriety is a disease is beyond doubt, and to punish it with a fine or short imprisonment or even as much as six months' incarceration in a prison, is an expensive and useless cruelty. The various well-known manifestations of alcoholism are involuntary, and the victim should be treated for bodily and mental disease. An unfortunate drunkard in this colony has not the slightest chance of being admitted to a hospital even when in a dangerous state of *delirium tremens*. No, he must be treated like the house-breaker or the forger, and sent to prison, where, there being neither nurses nor appliances for the treatment of such cases, he has to get on the best way he can.

25. As regards juvenile crime, the general opinion of those worthy of consideration tends to show that the greater part of the crimes—so prevalent now in this colony—committed by youths may be traced to bad home-training, or perhaps the entire absence of home influences or training—a neglect on the part of parents to train up their children amounting to criminality. The neglected child, if not sent to an industrial school, quickly develops into the criminal child, and on attaining the age of fifteen or thereabouts is a thorough adept in crime. In any of our larger towns may be seen nightly groups of these hobbledehoys congregated at the street-corners, insulting passers-by and polluting the air with foul and obscene language. A careful study of the former history of these hoodlums shows that they commence at about six or seven years of age by playing truant; and it seems a perfect matter of indifference to the parents whether their children reach school or not. The next step is, they are found robbing cemeteries, gardens, or orchards; next become street-Arabs; and, to follow them on, after serving short sentences of imprisonment become race-course speebers, "confidence-men," or "cracksmen," and finally developing into burglars, horse-stealers, or forgers, are sentenced to penal servitude, and have to be kept by the colony for the remainder of their natural lives. The remedy appears to be that neglected children when young should be sent to industrial schools at the expense of their parents, and so given a chance of becoming useful instead of dangerous members of society; and if the parents are without money to pay for their children they should be compelled to earn it by the sweat of their brows. On the other hand, criminal children should be sent to reformatories proper; by which arrangement there could be no possibility of contamination.

26. It should be imperative both in industrial schools and reformatories that entirely separate establishments in separate localities be maintained for the accommodation of male and female children, and on no account should both sexes be located under the same roof. The following extract from my annual report for the year 1881 is again published, and I can only add this: that the Surrey Reformatory was, to my mind, in 1880, when I last visited it, and made minute inquiries into its detail workings, the most valuable institution of the sort in England: "The reformatories and industrial schools are no doubt very valuable institutions for training such juveniles; but the scope of such training requires extension, so as properly to increase its beneficial results; and I believe an establishment similar to the Philanthropic Society's Farm School for the Reformation of Criminal Boys, at Redhill, Surrey, might be opened with great advantage somewhere in the colony, when the boys, after learning farm-work for a certain portion of their sentences, might be apprenticed to farmers willing to take them, who, as long as the boys continued to behave well, would give them employment, and take an interest in their future welfare."

#### FIRST OFFENDERS PROBATION ACT REPORT.

1. It is exceedingly gratifying to be able to report that this Act continues to work smoothly and well, and generally carries out the intentions and purport of its introduction. A reference to Table L shows that during the year ended 31st December last, out of a total of 82 offenders treated under the Act 40 satisfactorily carried out the conditions of their licenses and were duly discharged, 1 was rearrested and imprisoned, 1 absconded, and 40 remain still working out the conditions of their obligations successfully.

2. Since the Act came into force, on the 1st October, 1886, 203 persons have been placed on probation. Of these, 143 have been discharged on satisfactorily completing the conditions of their licenses, 49 are still on probation, 10 have been rearrested and brought to justice, and 1 only has managed, by eluding the vigilance of the Probation Officers and police, to escape so far unpunished, but there are good reasons for supposing that he has not left the colony, and will probably be rearrested. It will be recollected that in last year's report 1 probationer was shown as absconded; but he was ultimately found, and carried out satisfactorily the conditions of his license.