

probation, seventy-seven remaining on the register at the 31st March, 1923. During the year four were prosecuted for breaches of the conditions of probation and suitably punished by the Court. These results compare favourably with the previous year's records, especially when it is considered that offenders on the average were much more difficult cases. In this connection no offender need complain of harsh sentences. The tendency is to become more lenient, and many who are now granted probation would a few years ago have been sentenced to terms of imprisonment. This becomes more apparent when it is remembered that six years ago only twenty probationers were on the Wellington register. The probation system is well on its trial now, and its success is beyond question.

There is, however, a grave problem existent, and that is the increase in crime generally, and more especially amongst young men, calling more for preventive than remedial measures. This increase has many contributing causes, such as the modern irresponsibility of youth, due to defective home training, the excessive pleasure-loving habits of the community, the fondness for drink, but also to a marked degree to the multiplicity of the billiard-saloon and the picture-theatre. All these are too much indulged, and their abuse weakens the moral fibre of youth, which easily becomes the prey of some vice. This question should be very seriously faced, and to my mind the authorities should give greater encouragement to moral and religious education.

There is one way, however, in which the Press also might very materially help in correcting crime, and that is in the suppression of details. In my own experience, with these weaker members of society I find that too much detail is just as suggestive as bad literature or the picture entertainment. The former bears the impress of truth, the latter are merely fiction. The strong-minded youth may fling all these aside, but the weak-minded absorbs these detailed particulars to such an extent that the next step is to commit the act.

It is almost superfluous to say that the youth under twenty-three looms very largely in our prison statistics, and also amongst offenders who are placed on probation.

The Offenders Probation Act gives the Court power in some instances to suppress not only the facts but the name of the offender, and in the case where a member of a reputable family makes his first lapse the suppression of the name is a wise one. To protect the public in publishing the name may sometimes be quite a laudable thing, but its demoralizing and humiliating effect upon families with an unblemished record is sometimes most marked, and I have known it to blunt the moral sense to such an extent that other members will succumb to temptation.

From one point of view I do not like to see accessions to my probationary register, and would gladly welcome anything that could be done to eliminate the cause. In this I feel that the Press, through educative methods and the art of condensation, would serve a very good end.

#### AGES AND TERMS OF OFFENDERS PLACED ON PROBATION DURING 1922.

Ages, in Years.		Four Months and under.	Six Months.	Twelve Months.	Eighteen Months.	Two Years.	Two and a Half Years.	Three Years.	Four Years.	Five Years.	Total.
10 and under	15	..	1	3	..	1	..	1	..	..	6
15	20	..	2	61	1	59	1	35	3	5	171
20	25	..	5	43	2	52	3	13	..	3	121
25	30	..	4	16	2	26	..	18	..	..	66
30	40	..	1	5	36	2	30	1	13	..	88
40	50	..	2	5	13	1	12	1	12	..	46
50	70	..	..	1	3	..	2	..	4	..	10
Totals		..	5	25	175	8	182	6	96	3	508

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