

Mr. Dransfield.
16th Aug., 1878.

561. Have you formed any opinion about a central prison for the colony?—I think it would be an excellent thing to have one for long-sentence men.

562. *The Chairman.*] Can you make any suggestion as to a good place for such an institution?—No; I have not given the matter sufficient thought.

563. *Mr. Tole.*] Are the visits of Visiting Justices frequent?—The average would be two a month, I suppose; sometimes more, sometimes less.

564. What is the usual course of procedure on the occasion of a visit?—We just walk through the gaol, look into the cells, go into the kitchen, and if any prisoner has any complaint to make we hear him.

565. You do not inquire for complaints?—No.

566. Do you look into the store department?—No.

567. *Hon. Mr. Gisborne.*] Do you visit the gaol when the prisoners are present, or when they are away at work?—Sometimes one, sometimes the other.

568. Do you ever see the men out of the presence of the warders, and ask if they have any complaints to make?—No.

569. Has there been any inquiry into the alleged ill-treatment of a prisoner who attempted to escape the other day?—There was to have been an inquiry yesterday, but neither myself nor Mr. Pearce could attend. I think the inquiry will be held to-day.

570. *Mr. Tole.*] Have you many applications from the friends of prisoners to visit them?—Yes.

571. Do you ever refuse?—I have refused when the same persons came too often.

572. *The Chairman.*] Is there any suggestion you wish to make to the Committee?—But one. I think, when a prisoner's time is up, there should be some arrangement by which the man could have assistance for a couple of days. It is scarcely likely a man can drop into work the very day he gets out of prison, and he ought, I think, to be assisted for a couple of days.

573. In what shape—money?—It would entail a good deal of trouble if any other system were adopted, I think.

574. Do you think it would be advisable to allow a man to earn some limited sum by his marks?—No doubt that would be the best way.

575. *Hon. Mr. Gisborne.*] Do you think the appointment of an Inspector of Gaols for the colony—a man of experience in such matters—would be advisable?—Yes; it would have the effect of insuring that one system was carried out all over the colony.

576. *The Chairman.*] No doubt you are aware that the punishment really differs in degree in the various gaols?—I am not aware of it. I have had no experience except in the Wellington Gaol.

Mr. Seymour.
16th Aug., 1878.

Mr. A. P. SEYMOUR, M.H.R., a member of the Committee, examined.

577. *The Chairman.*] We wish chiefly to get your evidence, Mr. Seymour, as to the condition of the Marlborough Gaol. Being a member of the Committee, it will hardly be necessary for you to put your opinions on record in evidence?—There is one point I should like to bring before the Committee's notice. It is this: That for a long time past there has not been a great difference between the number of officers and the number of prisoners in the gaol, but there is accommodation for more prisoners, supposing they were not very violent or very clever men who were sent. Escapes are possible, and have taken place from time to time, and the gaol is totally unfit for men undergoing long sentences. We have one man there who is sentenced for life. He is a Maori, and happens to have distinguished himself by remarkably good conduct during the time he has been there.

578. But he does not want to get out, does he?—He has made application for remission; but there was a rumour some time ago that if ever he got out his tribe or some of his people would kill him for the offence of which he had been convicted. He was convicted of the murder of a settler, in Pelorus Sound, named Grant.

579. You mean to say, then, that your gaol is not full, but it is only fit for quiet offenders who are short-sentenced?—Yes; it would be suitable for them.

580. The cost of transit is the thing?—I do not think it would be very great, and opportunities for transit are now frequent and regular.

581. Is the discipline good there?—Yes; I think so.

582. I suppose it would be rather more indulgent than it is in larger gaols?—I think it is; but I have not had any experience of large gaols. It is carefully and well conducted, I think. There is no provision for classification at all, and no provision for female prisoners of any kind whatever. I think that is rather recognized by the Justices in the district, because we seldom have females convicted.

583. How many cells are there in the gaol?—I do not remember the number.

584. When you say the gaol would hold a good many more, how many do you mean?—I think it would hold ten or twelve men.

585. Would they be put more than one in a cell?—I expect so. I think there are about six cells.

586. You know it is generally thought advisable to have only one in a cell, but that, if there must be more than one, there should be more than two?—Yes.

587. What is the gaol built of?—Wood.

588. And a determined man could easily get away?—Yes; it would not be difficult at all. One man got away, and the next thing we heard of him was that he was in San Francisco. Another man escaped twice, and when retaken we had to put him in irons till you, at my request, transferred him to Hokitika.

589. Then it is not much more than a lock-up?—Very little.

590. And it is over-officed?—Well, there is a gaoler and also there are two warders. You cannot do with less, whether you have one or a dozen men.

591. *Mr. Ormond.*] How many prisoners have you now?—For some time we had only three, from that to four or five. I question whether you will find there have been five there during the last twelve months.