

Mr. Curtis.
16th Aug., 1878.

623. Has the mark system worked satisfactorily since it has been introduced?—Yes. I may mention, incidentally, that there are no regulations in force for debtors. The Act under which regulations were made in this respect has been repealed.

624. Yes; it was supposed imprisonment for debt had been abolished when these regulations came out?—Yes.

625. Have you a separate debtors' prison?—A separate part of the gaol is used for them, and they have a separate exercising yard. The boys, if any are in gaol, are put with them.

626. Do prisoners all get their meals in common together?—Yes.

627. All kinds of offenders?—Yes.

627A. Are men who are committed for trial put with the other men?—Yes.

628. Are any trades taught in the gaol?—No; but a man is put to work at his trade if possible. Thus, shoemakers and carpenters work at their respective trades, but there is no instruction given.

629. What is the hard labour done by the prisoners at Nelson?—The hard labour is done upon any public works within a reasonable distance that are required by the Government, such as repairs and alterations of the gaol, keeping Government grounds in order, and protecting the river banks; and when there is no Government work required their services are placed at the disposal of the Corporation for works about town.

630. Does the City Council pay for those services?—No.

631. There is no means, then, of judging what the work and labour of the prisoners is worth?—Only approximately.

632. Has your attention been called to the rations' scale?—Not specially.

633. You have no particular reason to know whether there is any deficiency or surplus?—No; but, from what I have heard, I think it is more plentiful than is necessary.

634. In what particular ration?—I cannot say. I am speaking from conversations with the Gaoler.

635. Is the gaol healthy?—Very.

636. And is it in a good situation?—Yes; it could not be better.

637. Is there room enough on the site?—There is no room for much enlargement.

638. If the long-sentence prisoners were kept out, would the gaol be sufficient in accommodation to allow of the classification of the ordinary offenders?—I think it would be.

639. Is there any religious or other instruction given?—No; not officially.

640. Is any given unofficially?—I am not able to speak upon that point.

641. They do not teach reading and writing in the gaol?—The prisoners teach one another, I think.

642. Mr. Tole.] Do not ministers of religion attend the gaol?—They may attend particular prisoners, but I am not aware of any regular service being held.

643. The Chairman.] So far as you have observed, are there frequent recommissions at Nelson?—Not to any marked extent; occasionally it happens.

644. Do you think the punishment deterrent there?—Yes.

645. When prisoners come out of gaol is there any difficulty in their obtaining employment?—Frequently there is.

646. Is there anything like a Prisoners' Aid Society in Nelson?—No.

647. Has there been any provision for giving men money when they come out of gaol?—Occasionally I think they earn small sums of money.

648. In the gaol?—Yes; a sum of money is given for a certain proportion of work done. There is an arrangement of that kind.

649. That is under the mark system?—Yes.

650. Do you, of your own knowledge, know of mischief arising from first offenders being put in with old offenders?—No.

651. Is the discipline of the gaol satisfactory so far as the officers are concerned?—Yes.

652. You have not had your attention called to breaches of discipline on the part of gaol officials?—We have occasionally, but nothing of a serious character. We had to remove a warder some time since for insubordination; but I do not think it was more than what would occur in any gaol. It was not particularly bad conduct; merely a falling-out among the officers.

653. Has any improvement in the prison buildings been made by prison labour?—Yes; small improvements have been made.

654. Do you think a gradual re-building of the gaol out of concrete might be effected by prison labour to advantage?—I am not able to say. I am under the impression that concrete building requires some special knowledge, which few prisoners would have.

655. At Lyttelton the gaol has been entirely re-built by prisoners learning the trade?—No doubt it could be done.

656. And it is found when the men come out they soon get work, as concrete building is becoming popular now?—Probably.

657. You think a penal establishment would be a desirable thing?—Yes.

658. Have you any suggestion to make as to the best locality for such a prison?—I think one of the sites recommended in the report of the Royal Commission on Prisons which sat in 1868. D'Urville Island would be a convenient site.

659. What could they work at there?—I do not know. I was looking at it as being the place for a prison, apart from any question as to work—being an island, and at the same time within easy reach of supplies. It is both central and accessible.

660. There is already a magnificent harbour at D'Urville Island?—Yes; I am aware.

661. You are aware Resolution Island was also mentioned on account of supposed granite deposits; but the granite has proved a failure?—Yes. There is an island in Blind Bay called Adèle Island that contains good granite.

662. It is a mere rock—very small?—Yes; the prison would probably have to be on the main land. That is also mentioned by the Commission.