

1886.
NEW ZEALAND.

THE PRISONS DEPARTMENT

(REPORT ON), FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER, 1885.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

The INSPECTOR of PRISONS to the Hon. the MINISTER of JUSTICE.

SIR,—

Prisons Department, Wellington, 31st March, 1886.

In presenting my sixth annual report on the prisons of the colony I have the honour to inform you that in the year ended the 31st December last I visited the thirteen larger prisons, on the dates stated in the attached table, marked J. I have also visited several of the smaller or police gaols whenever time and circumstances permitted, and have devoted the entire time at my disposal to the various duties appertaining to my office as Inspector of Prisons. On the whole I have every reason to be satisfied with the manner in which these institutions are conducted, as well as with the care and treatment of the inmates.

2. In no instance has there been any complaint brought under my notice regarding the quality of the rations supplied, and these, together with the clothing, bedding, and necessities which are obtained by contract, have been carefully inspected before delivery, and found of good quality and according to sample.

3. There have been nine escapes or attempted escapes reported during the year—namely Auckland two, Mount Cook four, Lyttelton one, Timaru one, and Tauranga one; but in every case the prisoners were speedily recaptured, or the attempts frustrated, without injury to the prisoners. In the case of the Auckland attempted escape two prisoners, while conveying breakfast to the female division, threw a tin of porridge at the officer in charge of them, and made off. The warder became for the moment unconscious, but the prisoners were seen by another officer, who immediately gave chase, and very speedily and pluckily effected their recapture. It is somewhat curious that both these prisoners were undergoing short sentences—namely, six and three months respectively. Of the Mount Cook escapes, one was attempted by a prisoner who could hardly be held accountable for his actions, and was immediately afterward removed to the Asylum. He was never lost sight of, and was recaptured at once. A more determined attempt, however, was made at this prison by two long-sentenced prisoners, who ran from off the works, and, though promptly followed by the officers on outpost duty, succeeded in going some distance before they were recaptured; but, the telephone being at once utilized, a large *posse* of the Armed Constabulary quickly turned out in pursuit, as well as the Gaoler, who succeeded in cleverly recapturing the runaways himself. The last case at Mount Cook was by a prisoner who had previously attempted his escape from the works at Lyttelton, on which occasion he was twice fired on before he could be stopped. At the morning unlock of the Mount Cook prison he was found to have cut a large piece out of the prison wall below his hammock, and doubtless, if not frustrated, would, with several of his comrades, have been at large early next night. In the Timaru escape a prisoner who had the week previously been sentenced to five years' penal servitude was working at the Hospital with four other prisoners, when he managed to elude the vigilance of the officer on duty, and, being surrounded by plantations, took advantage of the cover to assist him in his flight; this occurred about 9 o'clock a.m., and by noon of the same day he had been recaptured and again lodged in prison by the police. The Tauranga escape was by a prisoner who, when out in the prison-yard, jumped the ditch and ran into the sea. He was at once captured and taken back. He was afterwards found to be insane.

4. Table A shows that the health of the prisoners throughout the year has been good at all the prisons. The daily average of sick has been 13.75 males and 1.6 females, showing a daily average increase over last year of 1.65 males, with a decrease of 2 females.

5. Seven deaths have occurred during the year, as against 9 in 1884: At Auckland, 1; Dunedin, 1; Lyttelton, 3; Wellington Terrace, 1; and New Plymouth, 1—all male prisoners.

6. No executions took place in 1885. Only one death-sentence was passed, viz., at Auckland, and in that case His Excellency the Governor was pleased to direct the prisoner's removal to the Lunatic Asylum.

1—H. 4.