

Courthouses.—A small Courthouse in wood has been erected at Onehunga, where the inconveniences of the small and old building in which justice was administered had given rise to loud complaint.

The Police Court at Auckland has been altogether rearranged, the Court-room having been curtailed and additional office-accommodation provided, as well as large loft for storage of documents. The height of the Court-room was reduced, and a coved ceiling introduced, being the best thought-out endeavour to improve the very defective acoustic qualities. This has been fairly successful, inasmuch as it was recognised from the first that a thorough cure was impossible owing to the idiosyncracies of construction of the building (originally erected for a Wesleyan chapel).

The Courthouse buildings at Westport have been enlarged, and altogether repaired and renovated, at a cost of £848. This has effected a much-needed improvement, the edifice having fallen into disrepair, and become too cramped. It is now practically a new building.

The Government contributed a subsidy of £700 towards the erection of the new Municipal buildings at Port Chalmers; and their completion during the year has provided much-needed and improved Court accommodation. The large central chamber serves both for the Town Council meetings and the Court, and the Resident Magistrate and clerks have offices. In addition, the Police have quarters.

At Kaiapoi a new Courthouse is in course of erection, with dependencies. The existing offices had fallen into serious disrepair from age and other causes, and were exposed to the flooding of the Waimakariri River. The new buildings are of brick.

The Courthouses most requiring to be erected, when funds are available, are at Danevirke, Hastings, and Rangiora.

Mount Eden Prison.—The two wings in hand of this new prison have been constructed entirely by convict-labour, and have necessarily progressed somewhat slowly for three reasons. The stone which is quarried from the reserve quarries closely adjacent is hard to get, and harder to dress; the general influx of prisoners has been markedly diminished during the present year; while Fort Cautley Prison absorbs a good number for the harbour defences. In order to facilitate construction, and expedite progress, a more extensive use of concrete in place of masonry has been allowed; and an outside contract has been let for the roof-work, for which the walls of one wing are now about ready. The work executed is all very massive and substantial. The lower floors of both wings are in occupation of prisoners, and it is expected that practically the whole portion in hand will be handed over to the Prison authorities this year.

Mount Cook Prison.—Construction here is entirely by prison-labour. The idea of continuing erection on the extensive lines for which the very massive and solid foundations have for some time been laid was abandoned upon your instructions; and the south wing, which alone had risen above foundation-level, has accordingly been closed by a temporary but substantial front. This wing and its towers have also been completed and roofed, the floors boarded, and platforms and galleries of communication to cells well advanced, while a considerable amount of internal finishing has been done. The provisional kitchen and other offices necessary to enable this wing to be occupied are planned and under construction, and a large quantity of excavation and lowering of the site to the level of the intended exercise-yards has been accomplished. It is expected that the whole work will be handed over completed to the Prison authorities this year.

Police-stations.—These are very numerous distributed over the country, and are in noticeable proportion rented tenements. The necessity for many new stations has been pressed by the Police Department, but the funds available have not been sufficient to embrace them all. New stations or offices have been erected in brick or stone at Ponsonby, Taradale, Pembroke, Kurow, Mosgiel, Balclutha, Clinton, and Invercargill; and in wood, at Martinborough, Waipawa, and Culverden. These are all substantial buildings, and have been designed both for the comfort of the occupants and with an office for the requirements of the service, while lockup and stable have been included wherever such did not already exist.

A contract has also been prepared* for a large and important central station at Dunedin in brick and stone, in which sanitation, ventilation, and fire-prevention have been thoroughly considered. This will enable the rented station in McLaggan Street to be altogether given up, its inconveniences, drawbacks, and unhealthiness having become intolerable, and will provide ample and comfortable accommodation for the Police Department for a long time to come, while its position between the gaol and the Courts will afford facilities and advantages for which that department has long been pressing. It is necessary to build additional police-stations this year, if funds are available. They are required at Devonport, Mount Cook (Wellington), Kaiapoi, Papanui, Oamaru, and Tapanui in brick; and at Helensville, Stratford and Pahiatua in wood.

Post- and Telegraph-offices.—These are even more widely distributed than police-stations. There have not been the same demands for new buildings, although the claims for additions and repairs on the Consolidated Fund have been very numerous. A new office in stone has been completed at Clyde, and a substantial wooden office at Palmerston North has also been completed, equipped, and occupied. The existing building at Longford has been removed to another site, and considerably added to.

The Postal and Telegraph accommodation is unequal to the public requirements in several places. It is represented to be absolutely necessary to make material rearrangements and enlargements at Christchurch and Invercargill offices, it being no longer possible to deal with the current work satisfactorily. The laying of the duplicate cable has also rendered necessary additions to all the offices and residences at Waiapuaka, owing to both the cable company's and the Government's staff being increased. These three large works it has been proposed to provide for and execute this year.

* Let June, 1890; cost £6,000.