

1892.

NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, PRISONS BRANCH

(REPORT ON), FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER, 1891.

ALSO

REPORT ON THE OPERATION OF "THE FIRST OFFENDERS' PROBATION ACT, 1886,"

FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER, 1891.

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,—

Justice Department, Prisons Branch, Wellington, 1st July, 1892.

I have the honour to present this my eleventh annual report on the prisons of the colony, together with the sixth annual report on the working of "The First Offenders' Probation Act, 1886."

I have periodically visited the various prisons on the dates stated in the attached table marked J. I have on all occasions found them kept clean and in good condition, every attention being paid to the sanitary arrangements, and a high state of discipline maintained, while the management is both effective and economical.

1. From the particulars given in Table L it will be seen that the First Offenders' Probation Act continues to work in a most satisfactory manner, and appears to be one of the wisest and noblest Acts of modern days.

2. The supplies for the various prisons have, as hitherto, been publicly tendered for, and no complaints have been made either by the prison authorities or the contractors. The usual custom of all tenders being addressed to and opened by the Visiting Justices has been strictly adhered to, and their recommendations have invariably been adopted.

3. Two escapes occurred during the year, both from Milford Sound, and the prisoners were speedily recaptured. There were no escapes or attempts at prison-breaking in any of the prisons proper.

4. From Table A it will be seen that the health of the prisoners at the various prisons has been good. The daily average of sick has been 6·97 males and 2·09 females—a decrease on the previous year of 1·42 in the males and of 0·59 in the females.

5. Nine deaths occurred during the year—viz., three at Auckland, three at Lyttelton, one at Napier, one at Wellington, and one at Milford Sound. In each case an inquest was held, and a verdict satisfactory to the prison management was returned.

6. There were no executions during the year. Two death-sentences were passed, which His Excellency the Governor was pleased to commute to penal servitude for life.

7. A reference to Table A shows that at the commencement of the year 495 males and 67 females were confined in the prisons of the colony, and at the close of the year 472 males and 62 females—a decrease on the previous year of 23 males and 5 females. In 1891, 3,452 males and 845 females passed through the various prisons, as against 4,062 males and 901 females during the preceding year—a total decrease of 666 in cases dealt with.

8. During the past year the daily average of prisoners was 459·22 males and 58·39 females, a decrease on the previous year in the daily average of 50·79 males and 9·31 females. This cannot be looked upon as otherwise than eminently satisfactory.

9. From figures supplied by the Registrar-General, the population of the colony was, at the end of 1891, 359,035 males and 317,016 females—a total of 676,051 persons; whilst on the same date the number of prisoners (males and females) was 534. The average percentage of prisoners according to population was, therefore, ·079—a decrease of ·006 as compared with the year 1890.

10. During the year 1891, 46 male and 2 female misdemeanants in default, and 66 male and 17 female supposed lunatics, were detained in the various prisons of the colony—a decrease of 17 males and an increase of 2 females in the former, and an increase of 1 male and 2 females in the latter, on the previous year: a total decrease of 16 male and an increase of 4 female prisoners.