

1895.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, PRISONS BRANCH
(REPORT ON), FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER, 1894.

ALSO

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

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER, 1894.

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 15th May, 1895.
I have the honour to present this, my fourteenth annual report on the prisons of the colony, together with the ninth annual report on the working of "The First Offenders' Probation Act, 1886."

1. I have periodically inspected the various prisons on the dates stated in the attached table marked J, and am glad to be able to report that, though my visits were in most cases surprise ones, I have in every instance found the establishments clean, well kept, every attention being paid to the sanitary arrangements, while the management is both effective and economical, and a state of discipline maintained that reflects credit on the Gaolers and their officers.

2. It affords me great pleasure to be again in a position to inform you that the First Offenders' Probation Act continues to work most satisfactorily, as will be seen in the report under that heading.

3. As usual, the supplies for the various prisons have been publicly tendered for, and there have been no complaints either from the contractors or from the prison authorities. A word of praise is certainly due to the Visiting Justices for the trouble they take in considering the several tenders, and recommending for acceptance, and, from their local knowledge, they are undoubtedly the more qualified to advise than would be the case if the tenders were sent direct to this office. As long as Visiting Justices are willing to take the trouble of dealing with these tenders, so long will their doing so continue to give satisfaction to both sides.

4. One escape from the works at Hokitika occurred during the year, but the runaway was speedily recaptured.

5. A reference to Table A shows that the health of the prisoners throughout the year has been good; the daily average of sick has been 6·23 males, and 1·49 females, an increase of 0·24 in the males and 1·49 in the females as compared with the previous year.

6. One death occurred during the year—namely, at Wanganui. The usual Coroner's inquest was held, and a verdict of "death from natural causes" returned.

7. No executions took place, and no death sentences were passed during the year.

8. From Table A it will be seen that at the commencement of the year 456 males and 46 females were undergoing imprisonment in the various prisons of the colony, while at its close there were 511 males and 44 females, giving an increase of 55 males and a decrease of 2 females. In 1894, 3,398 males and 665 females passed through the various prisons, as against 3,572 males and 724 females during the previous year, a total decrease of 173 in cases dealt with. This is certainly satisfactory.

9. The daily average number of prisoners in the gaols during the past year was 495·89 males and 51·45 females, an increase of 38·55 in the males, and a decrease of 3·27 in the females. This and the foregoing paragraph clearly dispose of the rash statements often made by persons who have not studied the matter, that crime is manifestly on the increase, and that criminals are being imported to the colony.

10. According to figures supplied by the Registrar-General, the population of the colony at the end of the past year was 386,624 males, and 341,497 females, a total of 728,121 persons; while the number of prisoners at the same date was 511 males and 44 females, or 555 persons; the average percentage of prisoners according to population was, therefore, 0·0762, an increase of 0·006 as compared with the previous year.

11. During the year 1894, 45 male misdemeanants in default, and 64 males and 29 females, supposed lunatics, were detained in the various prisons of the colony, an increase in the former of 3, and in the latter a decrease of 12 males, and an increase of 14 females. I stated last year that "I