

The industry of the prisoners has been good as a body. As I have already stated, many of them perform their work very well; others are naturally idle and careless, and when free are found loitering around hotels in a more or less drunken state, and seldom or never do an honest day's work; but even these, when their sentences are long enough, often become good workers. Short terms of imprisonment are absolutely useless in the case of habitual drunkards and criminals. A short sentence has often brought a first offender to his senses, and the first offence has also been the last; but such sentences never do good in the case of the drink-sodden and idle men and women, who are often convicted six or seven times in a year. For such the only hope of reform is steady work, habits of cleanliness, abstinence from alcohol and tobacco for a long period, and a knowledge that each time they come before a Court their sentence will increase in length. I endeavour to put prisoners to their trade if they have one, and for those who are not tradesmen, and have sentences of sufficient duration, I have taught as much as possible, to enable them to earn an honest living on their liberation. Some of the Maori prisoners have shown a great aptitude for tailoring, shoemaking, &c., and have become quite proficient at the use of the sewing-machine and needle. On the whole, I am perfectly satisfied with the amount of work done, and also with its quality; in fact, it is surprising that unskilled men can put out such excellent stone-work as is to be seen in the prison-building.

The conduct of the officers of the Prison has, on the whole, been very satisfactory, only one serious offence having been reported on by me, resulting in the transfer of the officer. I am happy to say there has been an entire absence of drunkenness amongst the staff. As regards efficiency, many of the officers are thoroughly capable, and are a credit to the service; others are not so effective, perhaps through no fault of their own, as many men are not suited for warders either by disposition or by previous mode of life; and, as the successful working of a prison depends on the efficiency of the staff, it is of the utmost importance that none but suitable men should be selected for this most onerous duty.

Only four boys under the age of fifteen years were received in this Prison during the year, of whom three were subsequently committed to Burnham Industrial School, and one remained in custody at the end of the year. All these boys were carefully kept apart from the adult prisoners, and from personal observation I am convinced that their imprisonment had a marked salutary effect upon them. I may state that, although those boys were entirely separated from the other prisoners it was only done by causing a considerable amount of inconvenience and extra trouble, which would be avoided if the new central wing were finished, when complete classification could be carried out.

Very good progress has been made within the last twelve months with the building of the new Prison, and the basement of the central wing will shortly be complete so far as the stone-work goes. In my opinion it is absolutely necessary that this work should be pushed on as quickly as possible; the old wooden buildings are rapidly falling into decay, particularly the roofs.

As regards the employment of the prisoners, most of the long-sentenced prisoners have been kept inside the Prison walls dressing stone for the new Prison, and doing other work for the same purpose. They dressed 7,309 cubic feet of stone, varying in value from 1s. 4d. to 8s. 6d. per foot; and in addition to this a considerable amount of building has been done, including a very fine piece of masonry—viz., a spiral staircase in the central wing. The shorter-sentence prisoners have chiefly been employed in the quarries obtaining stone for dressing inside the walls, breaking into metal, &c. There have also been a daily average of twenty-eight men located at Fort Caulley Prison, and employed on the various fortification-works at the North Shore. During the year there has also been done 1,003 days' work for Government House, Supreme Court, Magistrate's Court, and Police-station.

There was no death-sentence in Auckland during the year. The longest sentence was one of ten years for a very savage assault (causing permanent injury) on a constable; the offender was a dangerous lunatic, and was subsequently transferred to the Lunatic Asylum, where he died.

The female division of the Prison is as nearly perfect as a prison can be. It is the only finished portion of the building, and is provided with every modern convenience for the health, work, and effective management of the prisoners, who are constantly employed in washing, making, and repairing prison clothes under the supervision of the matrons, who are thoroughly trustworthy and efficient officers. But here again the short sentences passed upon many of these women stultifies any effort for their reformation. Several of them have more than one hundred convictions recorded against them, and have to my knowledge been almost continuously in prison for the last twenty-five or thirty years, but who still receive sentences of from twenty-four hours to one or two months—seldom more. The consequence is that they come into prison half-dead and filthy beyond relief, and are hardly strong and clean when they are discharged, only to come back in a few days or weeks as bad as before; and so they go on year after year, often being received six or seven times in as many months.

After your annual protests against the committal to prison of persons suffering from the effects of alcohol, it is hardly necessary for me to point out how utterly wrong such a practice is. While I write this a man has been received who was taken from the District Hospital and committed here "for medical treatment." This fact speaks for itself. There is no resident medical man in the Prison, and no means of procuring such things as are usually necessary for the treatment of these cases—beef-tea, hot baths, &c.—as it is at night when the patients are invariably at their worst. The noise made by them disturbs the prisoners who have been at work all day, and it also distracts the attention of the officers on duty from their special work of detecting attempts to escape. These cases cause much trouble and anxiety to the Prison staff, and it is unfair to the officers, hard-labour prisoners, and the patients themselves to commit to prison persons for treatment which can only be properly carried out in a hospital or lunatic asylum.