

where he was originally convicted, whereas an amendment directing that he or she be brought before a Judge of the Supreme Court or a Stipendiary Magistrate (as the case may originally have been) is all that is required.

The same Gaoler thinks the Act has rather encouraged persons to imagine they can commit one offence with impunity, and undoubtedly there is force in that contention; but when, as shown above, it is found that 82·69 per cent. of probationers satisfactorily carry out their probation, while only 2·4 per cent. abscond, it will be at once admitted that the good work done by the Act far exceeds the risk of harm referred to.

I have, &c.,

A. HUME,

Inspector of Prisons.

GAOLERS' REPORTS FOR 1901.

AUCKLAND PRISON.

H.M. Prison, Auckland, 14th January, 1902.

SIR,—

I have the honour to forward herewith the annual returns for this Prison for the year ended 31st December, 1901.

The capacity of the Prison staff and the accommodation of the Prison have been severely taxed during the year, owing to the very large number of prisoners received (1,016) and to the abnormal daily average (192·22), which is twenty-six greater than that of the previous year.

The quality of the rations supplied by the contractors has been, on the whole, very satisfactory, the different articles having been of a uniform excellent character; consequently complaints by prisoners as to the quality of their food have been practically nil.

There was one death only in the Prison during the past year—viz., that of a man who was sentenced to fourteen days' imprisonment, and upon whose warrant the committing Justice had noted, "This man is a fit subject for the Prison hospital." An inquest was held, and the jury returned a verdict of "Death from natural causes," and added a rider to the effect that further inquiry should take place as to whether the deceased should not have been "sent to the district hospital instead of to prison." In this case, as in most others where persons are sent to prison for medical treatment, there can be no two opinions as to which is the right course to take. I do not think that any person should be sent to prison who is not in a fit state to plead; but, as a matter of fact, the great majority of people who are committed to prison for curative treatment are quite unable to understand what they are charged with, or even where they are. In the case of the man whose death is above mentioned this was undoubtedly so. It is quite certain that he knew nothing of what was taking place when he was sentenced, or that he was afterwards in prison. In making these remarks I do not for one moment mean to imply that these cases do not receive proper and adequate treatment in the different prisons, or that their lives would have been prolonged for an hour if they had been sent to a hospital, for to my knowledge they receive every possible attention, and, as a rule, make rapid recovery, but only after having deprived a number of officers and prisoners of their well-earned rest and dislocated the necessary and usual routine of the prison; and when a death occurs in gaol people are only too ready to attribute it to neglect, whereas if the patient had died in the hospital the same persons would look at it as a matter of course. I am of opinion that if a person when arrested requires hospital treatment the case should be sent to a hospital and not to a prison, where the infirmary is intended only for the nursing of prisoners suffering from some ordinary ailment. The general health of the prisoners has been remarkably good, there having been no cases of fever or other serious or infectious disease. The daily average on the sick-list was 0·80, all males, as against 1·80 for the previous year.

The conduct of the prisoners, taking them as a body, has been excellent. There have, as a matter of course, been exceptions; but when it is seen that 1,185 prisoners were dealt with during the year, and that only sixteen individuals were punished by the Visiting Justices, and that good discipline has been maintained, it must be admitted that the result has been eminently satisfactory. As several of the prisoners were punished more than once, the total punishments were twenty-four; this, with the higher daily average, is a reduction of seven individuals and twelve punishments as compared with the previous year.

The majority of the long-sentence prisoners have been remarkably industrious, and have shown great interest in their work, many of them having become very proficient at various trades. It is rather a curious fact, but one well known to prison officials, that men and women who never do an honest day's work when free become some of the hardest workers when sent to prison for long terms; while the same people coming to prison for short sentences idle and malingering as much as possible. One reason for this is that when the term is long they have an incentive to work hard and to behave well in order to obtain a remission of sentence; whereas the same reason does not apply to short sentences, where there is no remission given. Another explanation is that when first committed they are often in such a poor state of health through drink and dissipation of all kinds that some time elapses before they are fit to do much work; but, as the regular hours, good food, cleanliness, and medical attendance gradually restore them to robust health, the desire to work becomes stronger. In my opinion, there can be nothing less deterrent than short sentences for habitual criminals, drunkards, incorrigible rogues, and vagrants; these people simply laugh at a sentence of two or three months, and look upon it as a rest to enable them to recruit their health and make a fresh start on their old careers on their discharge. When it is remembered that each of these people is a "plague-spot" to society, and through whose example others are continually being led into the same habits, and who each and all contaminate the young of both sexes, I cannot think that sentences of seven or fourteen days, or even two or three months, are adequate