

DUNEDIN PRISON]

SIR,—

H.M. Prison, Dunedin, 30th January, 1902.

In accordance with your circular memorandum (1900/8) of the 1st December, 1900, I have the honour to report on the working of this Prison for the year ending the 31st December, 1901.

Only four cases of lunacy and delirium tremens were received during the year, and I regret to say one of these proved fatal, the prisoner dying the following morning. The prisoner was seen by the Gaol Surgeon immediately after his reception, who, after examination, did not consider it advisable to order his removal to the Dunedin Hospital. The verdict of the jury was, "Natural causes—tubercular meningitis." The other three were discharged at the S.M. Court after expiration of their remands.

A female prisoner suffering from phthisis was recommended by the Gaol Surgeon for removal to the Dunedin Hospital, but as the Hospital accommodation was taxed she could not be admitted. An application was made to the Benevolent Institution Trustees, who approved of her being received into the infirmary of that institution, and on authority received from your office she was removed thither, and so remains. She is visited weekly by a matron of the Prison. There were no other cases requiring special medical treatment. All prisoners are examined by the Gaol Surgeon (who visits almost daily) immediately after reception, and minuted by the Surgeon as fit for hard labour or otherwise, and again examined prior to discharge, in accordance with sections 24 and 25, Prison Regulations, 1883. The Surgeon visits at Taiaoroa Heads Prison as may be deemed requisite.

I am pleased to say no boys were admitted to the Prison during the year.

There has been ample accommodation at Dunedin Prison (fifty-two male cells), the daily average being sixty-four male prisoners; but thirty-eight are located at Taiaoroa Heads Prison, leaving fourteen cells daily unoccupied.

The accommodation at Taiaoroa Heads Prison is for fifty male prisoners, the daily average treated there being thirty-eight.

The female accommodation at Dunedin is for twenty, the daily average number of prisoners being twelve. The accommodation at Dunedin provides a separate cell for each prisoner (male or female), but at Taiaoroa Heads it is association.

The classification rules—as, indeed, the Prison Regulations generally—have been duly carried out as far as circumstances would permit.

The conduct of the prisoners has been exceptionally good, eleven prisoners only having been sentenced by the Visiting Justices to punishment diet, four of which sentences were not inflicted, having been passed by the Justices pending good conduct, and, the conduct of those prisoners having improved, they reaped the benefit thereof. Eight prisoners were sentenced to forfeiture of a small number of remission marks instead of any severe punishment. The daily occurrence of trivial offences have to be passed by, much to the detriment of the discipline of the Prison and to the detriment of the prisoners themselves, they knowing there is no deterrent for irregularities, but only for more serious offences.

Gaoler's quarters still unbuilt. Married warders still live from one end of Dunedin to the other—here, there, and everywhere—everywhere but where they should reside—viz., adjacent to the Prison.

The majority of the prisoners continued to be employed at Taiaoroa Heads—Defence Department works—rock-excavating a gallery and covered way from track leading from Harrington Point Jetty to Electric and Searchlight Station, about 9 chains. This work is of a very heavy nature. Also excavating and quarrying for site of 6 in. gun at the Heads Signal-station, and stone-breaking for concrete-work.

A smaller party of short-sentenced prisoners are also employed for Defence Department in forming a rifle-range at Pelichet Bay, Dunedin. The reports regarding these works are satisfactory.

There have been no escapes (or attempts to escape) during the year. The warders have been attentive and the supervision effective.

The prisoners' rations are supplied by contract. They have been good and regularly supplied, frequently inspected, and there have been no complaints either as to quality or quantity.

Every Sunday during the year a Church service for Protestant prisoners has been held at Dunedin Prison, and also at Taiaoroa Heads Prison. Mr. Torrance, as Gaol Chaplain for Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society, still supervises this work, with an assistant obtained at the latter end of the year. They have free intercourse with all the prisoners, and their influence over them is very beneficial. A Roman Catholic service is held on Sunday afternoon, a priest generally attending. The Rev. A. Don (Presbyterian), Chinese missionary, visits such Chinese as are in the prison. As at times difficulties exist in understanding the ailments and requirements of these men, the services of the reverend gentleman as interpreter are highly appreciated.

One warder was transferred to Lyttelton Prison and one resigned. Two warders were received on transfer from other prisons, and one was appointed on probation as an addition to the staff.

During the year Julius Hyman, Esq., J.P., was appointed a Visiting Justice of the Prisons at Dunedin and Taiaoroa Heads, the number of Visiting Justices now being twelve.

There are no Official (male) Visitors at this Prison.

It is often thought and said that prisons are close institutions, and that terrible things are done within the walls, but to show how futile and absurd such a notion is I submit the number and description of visitors during the past year—viz., 2 by Inspector of Prisons, 2 by Stipendiary Magistrate, 224 by Visiting Justices, 4 by Official Visitors (female), 121 by Mr. Torrance or assistant, 86 by other clerical (or lay) ministers, 786 by other persons (including M.H.R.s, J.P.s, legal advisers, and prisoners' friends), making a total of 1,225. In addition to the above