

The amount of costs ordered to be paid by the various Courts before whom these offenders were brought was £436 19s., of which £209 1s. has been actually paid, and there is every reason to suppose the balance will be paid by instalments as it becomes due. The approximate cost of keeping these offenders had they been sent to prison would have amounted to £4,523, which sum, added to the amount of costs, &c., actually paid in, represents a saving of £4,732 1s.

Of the 1,456 persons placed on probation since the introduction of "The First Offenders' Probation Act, 1886," 1,199 have been discharged after satisfactorily carrying out the conditions of their licenses, 91 have been rearrested and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment, 1 committed suicide, 1 died, 1 was sent to a lunatic asylum, 34 absconded, and 129 still remain fulfilling the terms of their licenses.

Some difficulty has been found from time to time in tracing probationers who may be constantly moving from place to place at certain seasons, such as shearing, harvest, and grass-seeding, but as a rule the Probation Officers manage to overcome the difficulty, and they one and all deserve considerable praise for the recommendations they make to the Courts and the zeal they evince in tracing and following up probationers till the conditions of probation have been complied with.

I have, &c.,

A. HUME,

Inspector of Prisons.

The Hon. the Minister of Justice.

GAOLERS' REPORTS FOR 1902.

AUCKLAND PRISON.

ALTHOUGH the number of prisoners received during the year was considerably less than that of the previous twelve months—viz., 717 males, 100 females, as against 819 males, 197 females—the daily average was again high, being 172·64 males, 14·9 females; a total of 187·54, against 192·22 in 1901.

The rations supplied by the contractors have been of a good quality; they are daily inspected by me or the principal warder in charge (generally by both), and frequently by one or other of the Visiting Justices and the Prison Surgeon. Complaints by the prisoners as to the quality or quantity of their food have been practically nil.

I regret to have to record the death of Mr. C. La Roche, V.J., who for the last seventeen years devoted much time and attention to his duties as a Visiting Justice, which he carried out in an admirable manner. Another death has also deprived the service of a most useful officer, namely, Principal Warder Rutherford, who superintended the building of the new stone prison, and who, from his great knowledge of the work and his tact in the working of prisoners, was a very valuable officer.

The health of the prisoners has been satisfactory, for although there was an increase in the number of cases treated as compared with 1901, there was no serious illness, the great majority being cases of influenza in a mild form. One man died, and one was accidentally killed; the former was undergoing a short sentence for vagrancy. He had been in a Home, but would not remain there, and after wandering about begging for some time he was sent to prison (where he had often been before). He was in a weak state on admission, and notwithstanding treatment gradually became worse, and died after a succession of epileptic fits. An inquest was held, and the Coroner's jury returned a verdict of "Death from natural causes." The second death took place at Fort Cautley Prison.

Taking the prisoners on the whole, their conduct has been very good. There were 29 punishments inflicted by the Visiting Justices during the twelve months now under review, but as several prisoners were punished more than once the actual number of individuals so treated was 19 only, out of 1,026 who were dealt with during the year. This appears to me to be the most fitting place in which to refer to an innovation which was made on the 26th June last—namely, the issue of tobacco to certain prisoners, with a view to improve their conduct and stimulate their industry. In my opinion it has not done either the one or the other, and it is unnecessary for me to say more here, as I have already reported fully my ideas on the subject.

I am pleased to be in a position to report favourably on the conduct and efficiency of the officers of this Prison. There has been an evident desire on the part of the staff to carry out their duties to the best of their ability, and they have succeeded well. There has been an entire absence of drunkenness, which is usually the cause of nine-tenths of the offences committed by men in any service. There were two cases of officers being a few minutes late for duty at first unlock, but neither of them, I feel sure, was wilfully done.

All the prisoners sentenced to hard labour have been kept fully employed, and an immense amount of good work has been done. The central wing of the new prison has advanced towards completion rapidly, and as it is urgently required it is to be hoped that equally rapid progress will be made this year. There is no doubt but that when this prison is complete it will be equal to any; its healthy site, isolation from dwellings, and inexhaustible supply of stone make it one of the most valuable prison reserves in the world. Stone-quarries are eminently suitable places for prison labour; there is no competition with free labour, and the cost of tools, &c., is less than in any other work.

Prison labour is still utilised on the fortification-works on and about Fort Cautley, also at Government House, Supreme Court, police barracks, and Magistrate's Court.

There have been no escapes, attempted escapes, or any other serious offences committed by prisoners.