

The spiritual welfare of the prisoners is well looked after—two Protestant, one Roman Catholic, and generally one or more Maori services being held on Sundays. Clergymen and lay readers of various denominations visit regularly.

The Prison Library contains a large number of volumes, many of which are instructive as well as entertaining; thanks to the kindness of some of the Visiting Justices and their friends we often get fresh works. Nothing is more appreciated by the prisoners as a body than reading, and, in my opinion, nothing is likely to have a more elevating effect, so long as the reading-matter is wholesome.

The First Offenders' Probation Act.

There were placed on probation during the year in the Auckland district 25 men and 3 women—making, with 11 men and 1 woman who remained over on probation from the previous year, a total of 40 persons dealt with under this Act. Of this number 10 men and 2 women completed their terms, 5 men were transferred to other districts, 2 men and 1 woman were sentenced for thefts committed while on probation, and 19 men and 1 woman remain on probation on the 31st December.

The costs ordered to be paid amount to £119 17s. 6d., of which sum £70 4s. 6d. has been received. There are several sums overdue for periods of from nearly five years to over one year. One of the 19 men remaining on probation was arrested for theft on the last day of the year, and another has evidently absconded, as he has not reported himself and has disappeared from Auckland. One man was transferred to this district from Gisborne, but did not report himself to me on arrival here, and has not been heard of since. Several of those who completed probation during the year were only on probation for from one- to three-months terms, which are so short as to be absolutely valueless.

The conduct of some ex-probationers is so bad that had they been in prison instead of on probation many people would have pointed them out as awful examples of the “hardening and demoralising effects of imprisonment.”

I have again to thank the members of the Police Force for the invaluable assistance which they render to me in working this Act, for without such help it would be impossible for any man to carry out the duties of Gaoler and Probation Officer in Auckland in a satisfactory manner.

F. EGERTON SEVERNE,

Gaoler and Probation Officer.

DUNEDIN PRISON.

I RECEIVED into custody during the year 309 males and 92 females, total 401.

One woman was sent to the Asylum for lunacy. She had often been in prison, and was generally noisy and erratic in her demeanour. Six women and 3 men were received during the year for medical treatment for excessive drinking. They were all discharged after remand.

No deaths occurred. No prisoner was sent to hospital for medical treatment, and the general health of the prisoners has been good during the year.

The female prisoner noted in my last year's report as located in the Benevolent Institution Infirmary is still there, and is visited by a prison matron weekly.

One boy (under sixteen) was admitted to one month hard labour, and was discharged on expiration of sentence.

In accordance with your instructions, a slightly increased scale of diet came into effect on the 1st September to prisoners on remand and awaiting trial, which, as it includes milk, is greatly appreciated.

I regret that I cannot report satisfactorily as to the conduct of the prisoners. Of 26 minor offences punished by the Visiting Justices, 9 were placed on periods of reduced diet, and 17 were deprived of portions of their remission, while three others were dealt with at the Stipendiary Magistrate's Court for aggravated prison offences.

The general behaviour of the prisoners was not good. The idea of special release at coronation time was very prevalent amongst the prisoners, and tended to keep them in a state of excitement, detrimental alike to industry and discipline, and culminating—as they saw the time arriving, and no appearance of any prisoner about to be discharged—in expressed open contempt and disrespect; and in spite of the coronation dinner of roast beef and plum pudding, and the granting of the daily indulgence of smoking, with a weekly issue of tobacco, the conduct of the prisoners at Taiaroa Heads Prison became as near revolt as it was possible to be, so much so that, in my opinion, it became absolutely necessary to immediately remove the supposed ringleaders, and upon their transfer to Dunedin, and subsequent removal, matters somewhat quieted down, but a feeling of unrest and an insolent demeanour has been (and still is in some of the often-convicted prisoners) very apparent. The passing-by of trivial offences daily and leaving them unpunished is, as I have previously reported, highly detrimental, and is simply sowing the seeds of discord and of more serious offences.

No Visiting Justices were appointed during the year. There are 11 now serving at Dunedin (one having been struck off during the year by ceasing to be a Justice of the Peace). Of these, 7 are on the visiting rota, and are detailed for attendance at the prison weekly.

Two female Official Visitors have been appointed.

The discipline staff consists of one Principal Warder and 12 warders, also a Matron and an Assistant Matron.

Of the male staff 4 warders have been transferred to other prisons, and 4 others received in their places, 3 of whom consist of returned troopers.

The conduct of the officers has been satisfactory, but a new hand has much to learn to become an efficient prison officer. It is not because a man has served the State in some other capacity