

I regret to say that there were four escapes at the beginning of the year, or, to be more correct, four prisoners escaped together by overpowering the officers and locking them in cells; but the addition of an extra officer to my staff, as also the greatly improved *personnel* of the staff, together with sundry improvements made in the Prison, will, I think, render any further attempts at escape as near as possible impracticable.

The issue of tobacco to prisoners undergoing sentences of three months and over has, I consider, been a very good innovation, or rather revival, but I think that it is to be regretted that the privilege is not extended to all those who would have seven clear days to serve after the next issue of tobacco succeeding their reception. I also think it would be wise to extend the privilege to the men waiting trial and who may be innocent, and on whose hands the time hangs very heavily. Some of these trial men also go to work and are industrious, and it would be a great encouragement to them if they were allowed a smoke with the others alongside of whom they work.

Eleven prisoners were punished by bread and water, an unusually large number for this Prison, but 8 prisoners at one time joined in a mild mutiny. They were promptly locked up, their tobacco stopped, were brought before the Visiting Justice, and 6 of them sentenced to forty-eight hours' bread and water. This was six months ago, and since that time we have had no trouble. In my opinion, the stopping of the tobacco has more effect than the bread and water, and since that occasion I have had no reason to exercise the power.

*The First Offenders' Probation Act.*

This Act still continues to work great good and very little wrong. During the year 5 fresh cases have been placed on probation, and 2 transferred from other districts. With one exception all have carried out their conditions faithfully, and all moneys ordered to be paid by the Courts as costs have been promptly paid, and there is not a single shilling owing. The one exception was that of a boy who committed another theft within a few weeks of his being placed on probation. He was again arrested and sent to the Industrial School.

R. T. NOBLE BEASLEY,  
Gaoler and Probation Officer.

WELLINGTON PRISON.

I HAVE the honour to report that during the year 1902 the conduct and industry of the prisoners has been good. There were 3 prisoners punished for Prison offences during the year. The health of the prisoners has been good. Two male prisoners sent to the District Hospital died there. One female prisoner died at this Prison. In all cases inquests were held, with verdicts of death from natural causes.

I have already reported that the issue of 1 oz. of tobacco weekly to deserving prisoners is giving satisfaction.

The prisoners were employed at brick and pipe making, and at the Point Halswell and Shelly Bay fortification-works. The men employed worked well, as they always do when under proper supervision.

There were no complaints about food.

The conduct of the officers has been good; none have been punished.

The excavations have been made for the new wing of sixty cells, and the contractor has put in the concrete foundations.

There was an attempt to escape by bolting from the labour gang on the way to the Prison, but the prisoner was promptly captured by Warder Bell.

The practice of prisoners when brought before the Court on charges of escape, &c., being allowed to make charges against the Prison and its officers, without rebutting evidence being heard, is detrimental to all discipline. All these bogus charges are hatched in the Prison. I may here state that the Chief Justice recently very promptly stopped a case of this kind at the Supreme Court. The prisoners can at all times make their complaints to the Visiting Justices, and also to you on your visits, and even to the Minister of Justice.

The Probation Act is still working in a satisfactory manner.

P. S. GARVEY,  
Gaoler and Probation Officer.