

NEW PLYMOUTH PRISON.

H.M. Prison, New Plymouth, 18th January, 1904.

I HAVE to report that there were 18 male prisoners in custody at the beginning of the year, 16 of whom were at hard labour, 1 awaiting trial, and 1 remand. The awaiting-trial prisoner was subsequently released at the Supreme Court, as also was a female who was on bail awaiting trial, the grand jury finding no bill in each case.

One hundred and seventeen males and 4 females were received during the year, a decrease of 3 males and 2 females on the preceding year. Of the males 1 was arrested as an absconding debtor about to leave the colony, and remanded to gaol. He was subsequently released on bail. Sixteen males and 1 female were received on remand as lunatics; 12 of the males were, after medical examination, committed to the Asylum, and 4 males and the female discharged at the Stipendiary Magistrate's Court.

Twenty males were received on remand and subsequently discharged at the several Stipendiary Magistrates' Courts, with the exception of one who was already serving a sentence in Auckland, and on receiving a further term of imprisonment was recommitted there.

One passed through *en route* to Waiotapu Prison, 13 were received on transfer from Wanganui Prison, 2 from Wellington, 1 from Hokitika, and 1 from Waiotapu. The expenses in connection with the transfer of the latter prisoner were paid by the creditors at whose request he was brought back.

Eleven males were received for trial, of whom 6 were sentenced to various terms of hard labour, 2 were admitted to probation, and 3 were acquitted at the Supreme Court. Three were received sentenced to simple imprisonment, and 3 received for medical treatment; 2 of these were discharged at the Stipendiary Magistrate's Court after a week to recover themselves, and the third was removed to the District Hospital, whence he was subsequently discharged cured, at least for the time.

Three prisoners pleaded guilty at the lower Courts, and were transferred to Auckland for sentence. One female, received on remand as a disorderly person, died, a full report of which has already been furnished.

Forty-five males and 2 females were received from the several Stipendiary Magistrates' Courts, sentenced to various terms of hard labour. One of the females, after a few days' attention, developed symptoms of insanity, and was by the direction of the Colonial Secretary removed to Porirua Asylum. Ten hard-labour prisoners earned their remission and accompanying gratuities, and were discharged; 44 males and 2 females were discharged on expiration of their sentences. Seven were transferred to Waiotapu and one to Wellington Prisons.

There were 4 admissions to the District Hospital during the year. Two of these were very old men, both over seventy years of age. One remained there until his sentence had expired, and was then removed to the Old People's Home; 1 died, and 1 still remains in the Hospital.

The conduct and industry of the prisoners has been good, with but two exceptions. These two refused to work, and were dealt with by the Visiting Justices.

The general health of the prisoners has been good, except those already referred to as having been removed to the Hospital.

The rations throughout the year have been good. No complaints by the prisoners. The quality of the rations has been frequently tested by visitors as well as by the Visiting Justices. I think we may fairly conclude that had there been cause for complaints we should have heard something of it.

The prisoners have generally been employed stripping the quarry and getting metal, &c., for concrete used in constructing the division-walls of the Prison. They have also kept Marsland Hill, the Police Reserve, and the Gaol Reserve in order, and were also employed in making improvements at the local rifle range. A party has also been employed building walls, &c., in the Prison, and have built a very substantial bridge which overlooks the whole Prison.

The drainage is still incomplete in consequence of the Borough Council not having furnished me with the levels required to meet their proposed town drainage.

Only £37 was received for metal, &c., from the quarry, as against £222 19s. last year. This shortage is on account of access to the quarry being cut off by the Borough Council since May last, and of the road into the gaol quarry being not yet completed. But it is now nearly finished, and I hope to have the quarry in full swing again at an early date.

I am pleased to say that there were only two youths under fifteen years of age admitted to prison here this year: one, a lad of thirteen, for theft of a shilling's worth of potatoes, was remanded for a few days, and ordered to come up for sentence when called; the other, a Maori boy of fourteen, for breaking into a settler's house, was committed to Burnham Industrial School.

The conduct and efficiency of the officers has been very good.

The First Offenders' Probation Act.

There were 5 persons admitted to probation during the year—1 received on transfer from Gisborne and 1 from Palmerston North, 1 transferred to Manaia, 1 to Feilding, and 1 to Auckland. The one from Gisborne completed his term satisfactorily, leaving 3 still reporting themselves and carrying out the terms of their license satisfactorily.

B. L. O'BRIEN,
Gaoler and Probation Officer.