

1908.  
NEW ZEALAND.

## DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, PRISONS BRANCH

(REPORT ON), FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER, 1907;

ALSO

### OPERATION OF "THE FIRST OFFENDERS' PROBATION ACT, 1886"

(REPORT ON), FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER, 1907.

*Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.*

The INSPECTOR OF PRISONS to the Hon. the MINISTER OF JUSTICE.

SIR,—

Department of Justice, Prisons Branch, 1st May, 1908.

I have the honour to present this my twenty-seventh annual report on the prisons of the Dominion, together with the twenty-second annual report on the working of "The First Offenders' Probation Act, 1886," and as the past year shows a decrease in the daily average number of the prisoners, and a slight increase in the number placed on probation, I think these will be considered satisfactory when all surrounding circumstances are taken into consideration.

1. I have, as usual, periodically visited the several prisons, on the dates stated in the table marked I, and have succeeded in making many of them surprise visits, and have on all occasions found the various establishments kept scrupulously clean, the sanitary arrangements properly attended to, and a satisfactory state of discipline maintained without undue severity. I have carefully listened to all complaints and requests made by either officers or prisoners, and given full consideration to those which appeared to require it. There are always plenty of requests for special remissions and suchlike. It is surprising but gratifying to find how few complaints there are of real moment.

2. Extracts from the annual reports of Gaolers are as usual attached, and a perusal of them shows that there is a great demand for more warders' cottages, and no doubt to have a thoroughly efficient service it is necessary the married warders should reside in the immediate vicinity of the prisons in which they are serving. The Dunedin Gaoler comments on the number of cases of intemperates, acute alcoholics, and supposed lunacy still being sent to prison for medical treatment, which he rightly states are a cause of grave anxiety to the officials, and in support of his argument quotes a case of suicide. Though I am thankful to say, as the outcome of repeated protests, the practice of sending such cases to gaols has considerably diminished, yet it will be a matter for great congratulation when such cases are entirely excluded from the prison population of our Dominion. The Gaoler's remarks from Wanganui on a similar matter, in the case of a dying Maori sent from Shannon, and a case of a man sent in a dying state to Napier Prison, are worthy of consideration. The drainage alluded to by the Gaoler at New Plymouth is now in hand, and will be completed at an early date.

3. A reference to Table K shows that the First Offenders Act continues to give the usual satisfactory results, and it is believed that the Act has done more to save those just entering a career of crime from their downward course than could have been expected from its most sanguine promoters, and every credit is due to the Probation Officers, who have quietly and efficiently carried out their important duties under that Act.

4. The supplies for the various prisons, excepting the tree-planting ones, have, as usual, been tendered for, and the acceptance or refusal of tenders has been recommended by the Visiting Justices, and carried out, with the result that there have been few or no complaints from either the Department or the contractors. It has not been found that contractors could always supply good potatoes, but when they have been unable to supply them, such substitutes as rice, peas, haricot beans, &c., have been given, and the changes were appreciated. Supplies for tree-planting prisons are obtained locally as far as circumstances admit.

5. There were 13 escapes last year, as against 10 in 1906—viz., 4 from Lyttelton, 2 from Hokitika, 1 from New Plymouth, 2 from Hanmer, 2 from Waiotapu, and 2 from Point Halswell (Wellington). All the escaped prisoners were recaptured and tried in open Courts.