

year, but, as 50 males and 18 females were received more than once, the individuals received were 472 males and 57 females; of those, 7 were declared habitual criminals, making a total of 15 habituais now confined in this prison. One received the death sentence, which was afterwards commuted to hard labour for life. The number of prisoners discharged was 537 males (including one habitual who had served his sentence was transferred to the Reformatory Prison at New Plymouth) and 78 females, leaving 113 males and 4 females in custody at the end of the year.

Two youths, aged sixteen and seventeen years respectively, received sentence of one month, but were transferred to Burnham Industrial School a fortnight after conviction.

The health of the prisoners has been good, although there has been a daily average of 2 on the sick list. This is accounted for by one being in the District Hospital nearly the whole year: he was removed there before the end of 1908 owing to a diseased leg, which had to be amputated; he was returned to prison at the end of June, but had to be sent back in October to undergo an operation for a tumour on his back. Another, suffering from varicose veins in one of his legs, one of which burst on the works, had also to be removed to the District Hospital for treatment; and both prisoners still remain in that institution. Two others, each sentenced to three months, were sick on admission: one, in the last stage of consumption, was discharged on medical grounds before the expiration of his sentence; the other has been in the prison hospital since admission. Had it not been for those cases, sickness would have been practically nil.

The conduct of the prisoners has been very satisfactory: there were only 8 punishments for the year, as against 42 in the year 1908.

The rations supplied by the contractors have been excellent, and there has been an entire absence of complaints by prisoners regarding food. The bread is baked in the prison, and is of excellent quality.

A daily average of 39 prisoners has been employed working for the Borough Council, and they have done good work in widening one of the streets where on one side was a deep unsightly gully. This has been filled in, road-metal broken and put on, a footpath formed, and it has now been made one of the best streets in the borough. Other work has been breaking road-metal, quarrying red stone and dressing it, building a band-rotunda, retaining-walls, &c.

Another party of prisoners have been employed at Artillery Barracks and Ripa Island as required, excavating, building retaining-walls and concrete tanks, widening and metalling roads, and making general improvements.

Work has also been done at the West Lyttelton School, building retaining-walls and enlarging the playground. This work can only be done during holidays when the school is closed, but when finished will be a great boon to the school-children.

Most of the long-sentence prisoners have been employed in the workshops at tailoring, boot-making, carpentry, and blacksmith work. In the tailoring branch excellent work has been turned out, officers' uniforms for all prisons in the Dominion being made here, also the bulk of the prisoners' clothing. I should like to see this work—tailoring and bootmaking—extended, and clothing and boots made for other Departments. If this were done more prisoners could be employed and taught trades, as the workshops are in every way suitable. This would not only be more profitable to the Department, but would also be beneficial to the prisoners. The knowledge of a trade would be helpful to them on release, and would afford them a better opportunity of finding employment.

Another industry—viz., that of matmaking—has been carried on, and a large number of mats superior to anything of the kind I have yet seen are now on hand. Some of the prisoners take a great interest in this work, and do their best to turn out a first-class article.

Early in the year a start was made to connect the prison and warders' cottages with the borough drainage, and to bring in a new and better water-supply. This work has necessarily been slow, some of the drains having to be cut to a great depth, and drilled through hard concrete most of the way. The work, however, is nearing completion: the sanitary arrangements are now excellent, and a vast improvement on former conditions. A hot-water service for bathing has also been installed, which is greatly appreciated by the prisoners, especially during the winter months.

The officers of the prison as a body have performed their duties very satisfactorily, and have taken a keen interest in their work. While maintaining strict discipline, it is owing to their fair and conscientious treatment, and tact and judgment in dealing with the prisoners placed in their charge, that so few have been reported and punished. I need hardly point out that to be thoroughly efficient a prison officer requires years of training and a special aptitude not always met with, and if the reformation of the offenders is to be looked for, too much care cannot be taken in selection of officers to fill vacancies. Those chosen should be men of high moral character, good physique, competent to obtain discipline, and at the same time contribute to the reformation of the prisoners by their good sense, tact, and example. One Assistant Matron was dismissed, and replaced by another, who is giving every satisfaction.

The spiritual welfare of the prisoners is well looked after. Clergymen of various denominations visit regularly, and three services are held every Sunday. Mr. Smail, evangelist, is indefatigable in his attention, and gives a helping hand to many on discharge.

FIRST OFFENDERS' PROBATION ACT.

Under this heading I have nothing to report, no one having been placed on probation by the Lyttelton Court during the year.

The Under-Secretary for Justice, Wellington.

A. W. IRONSIDE, Gaoler.