

GAOLERS' REPORTS FOR 1912.

AUCKLAND PRISON.

SIR,—

H.M. Prison, Auckland, 21st January, 1913.

I have the honour to submit the following report on the working of this Prison for the year ended 31st December, 1912.

I took charge of the Prison on the 30th January, 1912, on transfer from the Prison at Lyttelton.

At the commencement of the year there were 256 males and 22 females in custody. This number included 14 males who had been declared habitual criminals, and 35 who had been sentenced to reformatory treatment, of which latter 25 had a hard-labour sentence imposed in addition. Of the females, 4 were undergoing reformatory treatment, 3 of whom had a hard-labour sentence imposed.

During the year 1,669 males and 139 females were received, of whom 17 males were declared habitual criminals, 27 were ordered to be detained for reformatory treatment in addition to a hard-labour sentence, while 1 habitual and 5 for reformatory treatment were received from other prisons. Of the females received, 2 were for reformatory treatment.

During the same period 1,674 males and 142 females were discharged or otherwise disposed of, viz.: Males—On remission, 108; at expiration of sentence, 1,182; acquitted and after remand, 208; transferred to other prisons or to the Police, 108; habituals transferred to New Plymouth when definite sentences expired, 9; to Mental Hospital, 4; debtors, 14; on probation, 26; released on recommendation of Prisons Board, 8; died, 6; committed suicide, 1. Of the females discharged, 12 were on remission, 101 at expiration of sentence, 26 acquitted and after remand, 1 on probation, 1 on recommendation of Prisons Board, and 1 undergoing reformatory treatment was transferred to the Mount Albert Industrial School.

There were remaining in custody at the end of the year 251 males and 19 females, 22 males being habitual criminals and 50 for reformatory treatment. Of the females remaining in custody, 4 are for reformatory treatment.

Four of the deaths alluded to took place at the Auckland Hospital and two at the Prison, one of the latter being the result of an accident caused through a plank falling on the prisoner's head. An inquest was held in each case, and verdicts returned in accordance with the medical evidence.

One prisoner serving a long sentence hanged himself in his cell, being found in the early morning, when the cell was unlocked, suspended from the ventilator by one of his hammock-ropes, life being extinct. He had done the deed so quietly that the prisoners confined in cells on either side of him did not hear the faintest noise; and there was nothing in his demeanour to suggest that he would be guilty of such a rash act. The usual inquest was held, and a verdict returned that deceased committed suicide by hanging.

The conduct of the prisoners generally has been good, the majority of them being amenable to discipline. There were 72 punishments during the year against 50 prisoners, 69 of the cases being for minor offences, which were dealt with by the Visiting Justices, while 3 were for aggravated offences, and were dealt with by the Stipendiary Magistrate. Thirty-seven prisoners were punished once and 13 more than once. When it is taken into consideration that one-third of the prisoners in the Dominion are located in the Auckland Prison, there being a daily average of 362.24 for the year, the punishments cannot be said to be excessive. There were no escapes or attempted escapes during the year.

The health of the prisoners has been very good. Although there has been a daily average of 8.86 on the sick-list, this is accounted for by several of the cases being chronic, 1 prisoner being laid up the whole year, and several others for a good portion of the year. There were 11 admissions into the public Hospital for various ailments, and 2 still remain in that institution.

The contractors for prison supplies have carried out their contracts in a most satisfactory manner. Complaints as to rations are practically non-existent, although one hears murmurs at times about the monotony of the diet. The food is certainly good, but I consider it should be more varied. This could be done with little, if any, additional expense.

The bulk of the prisoners are employed quarrying and stone-cutting. About 80 are daily employed outside the Prison, quarrying and splitting stone, to be sent into the stone-cutting yard, there to be dressed ready for the builders. A large number of prisoners, all serving long sentences, are employed in this yard, which is situated within the Prison. The majority of them work well, some taking more than a passing interest in their work. When it is taken into consideration that none have done stone-cutting or building before coming to prison, it is surprising to see the work that can be carried out under competent instructors. The whole of the Prison has been built by prison labour, and the work will compare favourably with that done by competent tradesmen.

A stone-crusher plant is attached to the quarry, road-metal from which is supplied to various local bodies and others requiring it. Old men who are useless for other work are put breaking road-metal. There is a ready sale for all metal that can be turned out. The revenue for road-metal and rubble for the year totalled £1,051 5s. 4d.