

The health of the prisoners generally has been good. Although there were no fewer than 14 admissions to the district Hospital during the year—viz., 11 males and 3 females, one male having been admitted twice—several of these were ill from various causes when admitted to prison, and the Surgeon recommended their removal to the Hospital.

Any cases of sickness treated in the prison were mostly of a mild nature. The daily average on the sick-list was 10, this large number being accounted for by a few chronic sufferers from rheumatism, heart trouble, &c., who are unable to work and are under the Surgeon's care.

The conduct of the prisoners as a body has been excellent. There have, as a matter of course, been exceptions, but when it is seen that 2,097 prisoners were dealt with during the year, and that there were only 40 actual punishments against 19 individuals, it must be admitted that the result is very satisfactory—34 punishments for minor offences and 6 for aggravated offences. One prisoner was punished 13 times, being also convicted and warned several times. He positively refuses to do any work or even take in his food, and in consequence has to be kept altogether apart from other prisoners.

There was one escape of a prisoner, employed in one of the outside working parties. He was recaptured within two hours, and, as punishment, received six months' hard labour. There were three attempted escapes from within the prison, which were dealt with by a Stipendiary Magistrate under section 24 of the Prisons Act.

A brutal assault by two prisoners serving long sentences was committed on a warder and a prisoner, with a view to rendering them incapable of resistance, with intent to facilitate their own escape. Both have since been sentenced at the Supreme Court to three years in addition to the sentences they were serving.

The bulk of the prisoners have, as usual, been employed in quarrying, stone-dressing, and building.

To enable the remaining portion of the south wing to be completed, a wall has been erected enclosing an area of 250 ft. by 55 ft., to be used as a stone-cutting yard, as the new wing will cut off the cart-way into the yard at present used. The wall referred to is 18 ft. high, and contains 13,200 superficial feet of masonry. Had it been built by contract it would have cost at least £1,600, but being built by prison labour the value is computed at £920, although the actual cost is only £70—viz., the price of lime and cement. Sheds and workshops have been erected, and the yard is now ready for occupation. The present stone-cutting yard can, for some time, be used as a working-place for prisoners undergoing reformatory detention, thus keeping them apart from other prisoners.

A hot-water service for bathing purposes—a long-felt want—is being installed. The work was commenced some months ago, but delays occurred in obtaining the necessary appliances. I am, however, glad to say the work will be completed at an early date.

The foundations of the south-wing extension are nearly completed, and building will be commenced as soon as the revised plans are received.

During the year the finishing-touches have been given to the west and south wings, the corridor of the latter being now used as a schoolroom, where some thirty prisoners receive instruction on three evenings a week, one of the staff acting as schoolmaster. The school was only started in November last, so that it is rather early to form an opinion as to results. The prisoners, however, appear to take a keen interest in their lessons, and express a desire to learn.

Physical drill for prisoners was also started in July last, where all under thirty years take part. A capable prison officer acts as instructor, and the bulk of the prisoners attending drill are emphatic in their praises of its good effects. The proficiency they have attained, more especially in Swedish drill, is highly creditable.

The conduct of the staff, on the whole, has been satisfactory, the only carelessness shown being on the part of junior officers, who do not always seem to be alive to their responsibilities.

FIRST OFFENDERS' PROBATION ACT.

At the commencement of the year there were 19 males and 2 females on probation, exclusive of those released under the Crimes Amendment Act.

Twenty-one males were placed on probation by the Supreme Court and 11 by the Magistrates' Court, while 8 were received on transfer from other districts, making a total of 59 males and 2 females. Of these, 18 males and 2 females completed their probation satisfactorily, 3 males were sentenced for failing to comply with the conditions of their release, 2 absconded, and 18 were transferred to other districts, leaving a balance of 18 males reporting at the end of the year.

Five prisoners released from reformatory treatment, also 6 males and 1 female habitual criminals, reporting at the close of last year, were placed under the charge of Mr. William Brakenrig, who was appointed Probation Officer under the Crimes Act, 1910.

Of those undergoing reformatory treatment, the sentence of 1 expired, 2 received a sentence for other offences and had their licenses cancelled. Of the habituals, 3 were granted their discharge, 1 male and 1 female had their licenses cancelled, and the other 2 are still reporting to Mr. Brakenrig.

I again desire to thank the members of the Police Force for the valuable assistance they have given me in carrying out the duties of Probation Officer. Although I have been relieved somewhat by Mr. Brakenrig taking over the supervision of those released under the provisions of the Crimes Act, still my time is fully occupied with the administrative duties of the prison, which are increasing year by year, and it is impossible for me to give the attention to the working of the First Offenders Act that it really requires.

I have, &c.,

A. W. IRONSIDE,

The Under-Secretary for Justice, Wellington.

Gaoler and Probation Officer.