

association for the whole State, with a departmental foundation at headquarters in Sydney. The Managing Secretary and a small staff, including male agents whose duty it is to be in attendance at the Police Courts, are appointed and paid by the Prisons Department. The salaries of two lady agents and the whole of the funds required for the relief of discharged prisoners are raised by private subscription. The association is managed by an unofficial council or central committee in Sydney, with local committees in each of the towns where branches have been established. At the time of my visit they were nineteen in number. From inquiries I made while in Sydney the opinion appeared to be that the organization had been very successful in its efforts, and that the payment of the principal officers by the State led to greater permanency and efficiency than was the case when they were paid out of the general funds.

In each of the other States I visited funds were provided out of the public purse to assist prisoners on their release. Different methods were adopted in each State.

INEBRIATES.

In the regulations under the Reformatory Institutions Act it is provided that the Inspector of Prisons shall inspect the inebriates' homes from time to time, and report to the Minister regarding them. This I have done, and the result of my observations is that while I am satisfied that the Salvation Army is doing all that is possible under existing conditions and with the means at its disposal, it is clear that no private body is in a position to exercise the control that is necessary over a large percentage of the inmates of the Pakatoa and Rotorua Homes. Many of the men, and women too, would be much benefited by a course of hard labour, but without compulsion some of them cannot be induced to work. Under State management the necessary compulsion could be applied.

STAFF.

The conduct of the officers at present in the Prison service has been entirely satisfactory, and I have to thank the Gaolers, Matrons, Acting-Gaolers, and the staffs under them for the manner in which they have performed their duties during the year. New conditions have had to be met, and important undertakings of an unfamiliar character carried out, but I am pleased to say that the officers placed in charge of various works have responded well to the calls that have been made on them.

An increase in the scale of salaries paid to prison officers was made at the beginning of the year, and a comparison with the rates of pay received by officers in other prison services is altogether favourable to the New Zealand scale.

Since my last report was written there has been only one retirement among the senior officers of the Department—viz., that of the Rev. J. L. A. Kayll, Gaoler at Waikeria, who voluntarily resigned in August last.

GENERAL.

Health of Prisoners.—From the figures given in Table A it appears that the daily average of prisoners on the sick-list was higher than for last year, but a reference to the Gaolers' reports shows that this has been caused by the fact that a number of the prisoners committed during the year have been suffering from some chronic form of sickness on reception and have in certain cases remained in the district or prison hospitals for months at a time. The general health of the prisoners has been quite satisfactory.

Deaths.—Thirteen persons died in prison during 1914, as compared with ten in 1913—four at Auckland, two at Napier, three at Addington, two at Lyttelton, one at Kaingaroa, and one at Dunedin.

Escapes.—There were seven escapes during the year, as compared with ten in 1913—two from Invercargill, two from Waikeria, one from Kaingaroa, one from Roto Aira, and one from the train while being escorted from Napier to Wellington.

FIRST OFFENDERS' PROBATION ACT.

The provisions of the First Offenders' Probation Act were not invoked by Judges and Magistrates to the same extent in 1914 as in the previous twelve months, but the number of cases dealt with under the Act fluctuates so greatly from year to year that it is impossible to draw any particular inference from the statistics presented with each report. The main fact to be considered is that the Act is still largely availed of for the purpose for which it was originally passed, and is the means by which many offenders who would otherwise be required to serve a term in prison are enabled to rehabilitate themselves. It has been felt for some time past that the practice of requiring first offenders on probation to report to the Gaolers as their probation officers is unsatisfactory, particularly at Mount Eden, where it is necessary for the probationer to enter the precincts of the prison in order to reach the Gaoler's office, and it is proposed to make certain changes in this connection.

A grouping of the returns under the Act shows that eighty-seven persons were placed on probation during the year 1914, as against 136 in 1913. Of these, twenty-four have so far satisfactorily carried out the terms of their licenses and have been discharged, thirteen have been rearrested, two of whom were readmitted to probation, four absconded, and forty-six still remain under the supervision of the Probation Officers.

The total sum ordered to be paid by the various Courts towards the cost of prosecutions amounted to £447 8s. 11d., of which £363 0s. 2d. has already been collected.

I have, &c.,

C. E. MATTHEWS.