

EXTRACT FROM SCHOOLMASTER'S REPORT IN REPLY TO INSPECTOR'S MEMORANDUM.

Progress of students: Speaking generally, I feel sure that all the men who have received a full year's instruction have made satisfactory progress. Of the fifty men at present on the roll about thirty have received a year's instruction, and at least twenty-five are eligible for promotion. Those who are not fit to go forward may be set down as mental degenerates, and even if they received ten consecutive years' instruction they would then be only average scholars. This type of man is almost hopeless. He needs careful individual attention, and with the limited time at my disposal I am unable to give much of it. Yet, although such an one may make but slight progress, I recommend his attendance at school, as he is at any rate breathing intellectual atmosphere, and seeing other men do their work with comparative ease may awaken his dormant faculties. I say "dormant" because I firmly believe that all the men at present attending school are capable of acquiring some knowledge; but there must be great care in its presentation. With regard to the average intelligence of prison students, this is a very hard matter to decide, as their qualifications are so varied that a just estimate seems rather improbable. I think I would be quite justified in saying that when I first receive the men they are below the average intelligence of school-children—they do not learn so quickly, nor do they at first evidence the same desire to learn; but once they become interested and realize they are making progress they learn much more quickly than children. From this you will see that I consider the average intelligence of the prisoners is equal with that of ordinary scholars. The mental degenerates before mentioned are of course excepted. Most of the men are capable enough and might learn readily, but they have a very natural hesitancy in owning up to what they really do know, and consequently waste a considerable time in "fencing"—making out they know very much more than they do.

Effect on students: Very marked. I have had men who on admission to the school were little better than animals. They resented my advances at first, but by slow degrees they became interested, and light seemed to dawn on their minds. This mental awakening is evident in the man's appearance: he walks along smartly, and has an air of mental alertness about him. Another factor, which to my mind is one of the strongest arguments in favour of the education of the criminal classes, is the fact that during the four years I have been instructing at the Prison upwards of two hundred men have passed through the school, and of these five only have reappeared on the school benches at Invercargill.

Re Maori prisoners: There seems to be no middle line with this class. With few exceptions they are deceptive and cunning, and on account of their mental laziness will scheme to get out of school-work. They assimilate what is presented much more quickly than the average European, and once they become interested they naturally become industrious. I have been extremely well pleased with the work done by the Maori prisoners and with the progress they have made.

KAINGAROA TREE-PLANTING PRISON.

There were 39 prisoners in custody on the 1st January, 1916, and 58 at the end of the year.

One prisoner escaped during the year, and was recaptured after three days, and transferred to the Auckland Prison.

The general conduct of the prisoners has been exemplary, and the work done on the plantation has been very satisfactory.

The general health of the prisoners has been excellent, there being a total absence of sickness during the year.

Divine service, both for Roman Catholics and Protestants, was conducted periodically throughout the year.

The officers carried out their duties in a very satisfactory manner.

Accommodation for an additional ten prisoners was provided by the transfer of huts from the Waipa Prison.

The quantity of vegetables grown in the Prison garden was more than sufficient for the requirements of the Prison during the year. The oat crop mentioned in my last report was a complete success, and will provide sufficient feed for the Prison horses until the next year's crop is harvested. The potato crop was also very good, and returned seventy-six sacks of good potatoes. About thirty pigs were bred during the year, nineteen of which were sold for the sum of £16 8s. 6d.; the remainder were slaughtered for the use of the Prison, the market value, at 5d. per pound, being £28 6s. 8d.

The following is a summary of the work carried out by prisoners during the year, viz.: Pits dug, 1,583,700; trees planted, 2,933,100. Lining out, weeding, forming fire-breaks, fencing, clearing for tree-planting, rabbiting, stable-work and general work, and the usual maintenance-work in connection with the plantation was carried out during the year.

LYTTTELTON PRISON.

There were in custody at the commencement of the year 126 males.

The greatest number in custody at any one time was 130 males, and the least number 49. Increased accommodation having been provided at Paparua Prison, a large number of men were transferred there from Lyttelton, thus accounting for the large margin in greatest and least number in prison at any one time. The daily average in prison was 85.819.

Two prisoners after being received were found to be suffering from a contagious disease, and in accordance with section 4 of the Prisoners Detention Act, 1915, were detained for curative treatment in the Prison hospital. After a course of treatment the men were discharged, their sentences having expired in the meantime.