

Material for building a drying-room and the erection of a glasshouse for flowers and seedlings has been obtained, but the demands on the working staff engaged at present on extensive work at Templeton and elsewhere have so far necessitated our local requirements being held in abeyance. Plans for conserving storm and waste water are also under consideration, which if carried out will materially reduce the expenditure per annum.

It is pleasing to be able to report the genuine efforts made by the public towards employment and rehabilitation for inmates discharged on probation, and the helping hand extended in the direction of reformation. This cannot but have the desired effect in some instances, although it is regrettable to realize that so many return to us after short periods of liberty.

Our total includes a number of very young offenders— their crime theft. They are absolutely untaught in domestic work, with meagre education and an inordinate craving for fine clothes and jewellery. This condition points directly to the lack of proper home training and influence. To meet and improve the conditions, arrangement is being made to employ a portion of each week in primary-school training — domestic duties, cooking, &c. Also, it is hoped in the near future to extend the educational side and introduce healthful recreation and exercises for the young inmates sentenced to reformatory detention in the institution.

AUCKLAND PRISONS.

There were five deaths during the year, all males. Two were on remand for alcoholism; the other three died of influenza during the epidemic— one was awaiting trial, the other two were serving long sentences. The two received on remand for alcoholism, on different dates, were so ill on admission that they only lived twenty-four hours. Another prisoner serving a long sentence committed suicide in his cell by hanging. An inquest was held in each case.

Owing to the influenza epidemic the daily average number on the sick-list (seven) was higher than in former years, there being as many as ninety laid up at one time when the epidemic was on. Apart from this the health of the prisoners generally was good, and there were only three admissions to the District Hospital, as compared with eight the previous year.

There were two escapes, one from the District Hospital and one from the Prison quarry. The escapee from the Hospital gave himself up at the Prison two days later. The other was caught almost immediately by the Prison officials before he got clear of the Prison Reserve.

The conduct of the prisoners on the whole has been good; there were only forty-five punishments by the Visiting Justices against thirty-four individuals. Those few out of a daily average of 230 is, I consider, very satisfactory. Prisoners can invariably see that good conduct carries certain privileges, and only a few “kick over the traces” occasionally; most of them recognize that strict discipline is necessary, and nearly all cheerfully conform to it.

Physical drill is daily being carried on for prisoners under a competent instructor, and a marked improvement in those who attend is shown in their general bearing.

School is held on three evenings a week for those who have little or no education, and good progress is made. The teacher takes a keen interest in his pupils, and they show an equal desire to learn. Some, especially Maoris, do not know the alphabet when they come into prison, and it is surprising how quickly they learn. They vie with each other in their efforts for advancement, and this spirit of rivalry spreads among the pupils generally, each endeavouring to do his best.

The conduct and efficiency of the staff has been quite satisfactory with one exception— viz., a probationary warder who was fined by the Magistrate for trafficking, and summarily dismissed.

The new workshops, the erection of which was commenced at the end of last year, are practically completed. Delay was caused by various alterations being made while the work was in progress and the difficulty in obtaining certain materials. The shops are on a fairly large scale, and can be utilized for various industries if required. Exercise-yards attached to the shops have been walled in, and the sanitary arrangements in connection therewith are well in hand.

In the other classification yards, six in number, the sanitary arrangements have been completed, including the fixing of wash-hand basins. A sentry's platform in reinforced concrete, which forms shelter underneath for the prisoners, is also completed, yards properly filled and centre-plots laid out; the only thing remaining to be done being the asphaltting and sowing of grass-seed, which will have to be left till the fall of the year, as the ground has still a tendency to settle. Stone steps leading from the East Wing of the Prison to the yards have been erected, and an area-wall built the full length of the building, with a 4 ft. width of passage, which gives a finish to the grounds. A photographic studio has also been built, and improvements made to the Prison grounds in the vicinity of the quarry by levelling, wall-building, &c. Although the Prison buildings are now completed, stone-cutting is still being carried on, there being various improvements yet to be made, including the heightening of the outer wall facing the railway, as from certain points prisoners while at exercise can be seen by the public. It is also proposed to make additions at the main entrance, for which dressed stone will be required. This provides work for the longer-sentence and dangerous class of prisoners whom it would be unsafe to employ outside the walls.

Quarry-work has again utilized the largest working-party, who get out stone for building purposes and for crushing into road-metal. Improved methods have been adopted for getting stone to the crusher: railway-lines have been laid, an oil-engine and hauling-winch installed, and the stone is being drawn to the crusher in trucks. By this means an increased supply of road-metal is obtained, but much requires yet to be done before the quarry can be made a payable industry.