

of our various institutions were concerned I found little to complain of. Complaints were few and far between.

Last year I found occasion to remark upon the difficulty of obtaining suitable candidates for the position of prison officers, and at the same time expressed the hope that the war being over it would be possible to obtain a sufficiency of suitable recruits. Such, however, has not proved to be the case, and one of the greatest difficulties confronting the Department at the present moment is the lack of men of the right stamp. It may be urged that a way out of the difficulty might be found by increasing the amount of salary attached to the position, also by improving the conditions under which the officers are called upon to work. No doubt such might help to improve matters, but at the back of it all it must be admitted that at the present rates of pay and under present conditions the prison service does not attract the class of men that is required to carry on the work satisfactorily under a modern system. Men who are possessed of the necessary qualifications fail to offer their services. Occasionally a good man is found, and so it is possible to keep matters running.

During the past year a marked improvement has taken place in the matter of the general standard of industry amongst the prisoners. In former years, owing to the uninteresting nature of the work upon which many of the prisoners were employed, it was found very difficult indeed to get the men to take an intelligent interest in their work. The advent of prison farms has, however, changed all that, and it is really surprising to note the keen interest taken by the majority of the inmates in their daily work. This, however, is not to be wondered at, and the prison farm is certainly going to be the means of giving many a man a fresh interest in life. Work in the open air amongst growing plants and animals gives a man a new outlook on life and tends to make a better citizen of him.

The system which you have recently introduced of appointing skilled tradesmen, farming instructors, and others possessed of special knowledge and ability to teach the inmates of our institutions various trades and callings is also having a very important bearing on the matter of promoting greater efficiency of effort while in prison and still further equipping a man with skill and knowledge of the work upon which he has been engaged against the day of his release. By this means men are turned out fitted to take up everyday employment with every prospect of success. The question of further classification of prisoners, especially at Invercargill and Waikeria, has received further attention during the past year. Work in this direction is necessarily slow, there being many formidable difficulties to contend with. Once the exercise-yards and recreation-grounds at present in course of construction at both of the above-mentioned institutions are completed it will be possible to give effect to many of the improvements which you have already in train. The system providing for improved classification methods has much to recommend it, and in so far as our labours have gone in this direction the results have been distinctly encouraging. Much, however, still remains to be done before the ultimate goal is reached.

PROGRESS DURING THE YEAR.

In my capacity of Inspector of Prisons and Supervisor of Prison Works it has been my duty to visit the various prisons where works are being carried on. The following is a brief summary of the progress made since last year's report was written:—

Auckland.—The main industry connected with this prison consists of the quarrying and crushing of stone for roadmaking purposes. Latterly it has become quite apparent that the old-time use of hammer and drill in connection with boring operations has become obsolete even for prison-labour purposes. In view of the present scarcity of road-metal and our inability to cope with one-half of the orders on hand, your decision to have an up-to-date air-compressor plant established is certainly good business. Once this plant is in operation the output of metal can be at least trebled. Stone-dressing for additions to buildings and for the purpose of providing material for the building of officers' cottages is being carried on inside the walls of the prison as formerly. Concrete blocks for internal walls are also being manufactured. Bootmaking with the aid of up-to-date machinery is also in full swing. Several cottages for officers are in course of erection. Provided your intention of having a new modern quarry plant established is given effect to, Auckland will prove to be one of the best revenue-producing institutions in the Dominion, besides materially assisting various local bodies in their difficulty in the matter of providing good roads.

Waikeria.—Building operations, in so far as the main institution is concerned, have been completed, leaving only the exercise-yards and boundary-wall to be built. A large reservoir has been constructed on the top of the hill at the rear of the institution and a 6 in. main laid. Several additional cottages have been built, and a comfortable building arranged for the use of single officers has been begun. Roading operations have been also further advanced and an additional farm branch established. Taken altogether, this property is rapidly becoming one of the most valuable in the district, and its condition fully justifies the action taken by the Department in taking over this property in the first instance. The experiment (for it was an experiment in those days) has proved a complete success, and should encourage the Department to still further extend its operations in this direction.

Wellington.—Brickmaking having ceased, the only work in hand at Mount Cook consists of levelling and preparing the site for the purposes of the proposed Technical College building. In addition, considerable revenue is being secured by cleaning and preparing second-hand bricks (of which there are large quantities) for sale. At Point Halswell work consists of making alterations and additions to the present buildings in order to fit them for occupation as a prison for females. At the time of writing this work is nearing completion. Work at the Terrace consists of gardening, &c. (only short-sentence prisoners and those awaiting trial being confined there now).