

that their aim in dealing with those under their charge should be, not to degrade but to elevate, and by humane and wise treatment prove that cure, not punishment, is their main object and consideration.

23. The prison-buildings in course of erection at Mount Cook (Wellington) and Auckland have made good progress during the year; and one effectual step in the direction of classification of prisoners has been the abolition of the prison-hulk at Otago Heads. The reclamation works at Sticking Point, Lyttelton, have been carried on during the past year to the satisfaction of the Harbour Board. Brickmaking at Mount Cook is energetically pushed on, and there is an order on hand for about one million and a half bricks for the new Government Printing Office in Wellington. Large quantities of bricks have also been supplied to the Public Works Department, to the Wellington and Manawatu Railway contracts, and Wellington Woollen Company, which could not conveniently be obtained privately. These bricks are universally admitted to be the best ever manufactured in the colony.

24. New prisons have been built (by contract) and completed at Wanganui and Greymouth, and the centre dome of the New Plymouth Gaol should be shortly completed, while the levelling round the site, referred to in my last report, is being carried out as quickly as the amount of prison-labour at my disposal for this work admits of.

25. An attempt on the part of the Otago Harbour Board to obtain a reduction in the rates paid for prison-labour from 2s. to 1s. per man per diem led to my being able to recommend a considerable saving in the cost of maintenance and supervision by the removal of the prisoners from the Otago Heads to the prisons at Lyttelton, Mount Cook, and New Plymouth, where their labour is far more remunerative to the department. For reasons I am unable to account for it has been obvious to any one closely watching the matter that for some time past there has been a desire to retard prison-labour at the Otago Heads, while every effort has been made in furtherance of the free men's labour. It has been a daily occurrence for prisoners to be kept idle upwards of half an hour at a time waiting for trucks, while the free men were never a moment without any appliances or tools they might require. Yet, notwithstanding all drawbacks, the Board's Engineer, after the periodical measuring-up had taken place, invariably expressed himself satisfied with the prisoners' work. At a meeting of the Board, however, it was evident that some of the members put no confidence in these measurements of work, though they were made by their own servants, and it was determined to discontinue employing prisoners. As a proof that this feeling against the employment of prisoners is not of a recent date, I would point out that as far back as 1880, when I first took charge of the prisons, this Board were paying only 1s. per man per diem, and the Engineer informed me that even that low rate of payment for prison-labour was a loss to the Board. The system adopted at the Otago Heads of working prisoners and free men side by side is a bad and unfair one; but, as attention has so often been invited to the unserviceable and dangerous state of the hulk, together with the several serious drawbacks to discipline and classification that must necessarily exist in a hulk-prison, it is, I think, a matter of considerable congratulation that the prisoners have been removed. A reduction of six officers has already been made, and I hope shortly to be able to recommend still further reductions. The more the prisoners are concentrated in prisons, the less will be the cost of supervision.

26. In October last Mr. McAllister, Clerk and Accountant, was transferred as Deputy-Registrar to the Supreme Court, Dunedin, and was succeeded by Mr. T. E. Richardson. I take this opportunity of placing on record my appreciation of the valuable services rendered to the department by Mr. McAllister for six years. A reduction has been made in the office by the transfer of the cadet to the Wellington Resident Magistrate's Court.

27. In closing this report it is respectfully pointed out, as conclusive evidence of the strictest economy being exercised in the management of the colonial prisons, that the amount asked for in the estimates for the various establishments for the current year is £7,500 less than the sum demanded for their maintenance when I first took charge seven years ago, notwithstanding that twenty-two police-gaols have now to be provided for which were not then in existence. I prepared a balance-sheet showing the cost of prisoners in the Dunedin Gaol for the year 1877, and another for the past year; and a comparison of these shows that at this prison, in the year 1877, with a daily average of 133·94 prisoners, the gross annual cost per head was £69 9s. 7½d., and the net cost £66 12s. 3½d.; whereas during the past year, with a daily average of 85·1 prisoners, the gross cost per head was £55 12s. 9d., and the net cost £44 8s. 2d. These statistics, I venture to assert, not only prove what has already been stated in support of economical administration, but give a conclusive answer to the repeated invidious comparisons between the present and the past which appear at intervals in some of the Otago newspapers.

FIRST OFFENDERS' PROBATION ACT REPORT.

As to the ultimate benefit to be derived from the principle embodied in the Act, I cannot but take a sanguine view. The population of New Zealand is one which pre-eminently has passed through the test of natural selection. The long distance from Europe has secured for us emigrants in whom it may be almost universally asserted there is not a taint of hereditary crime, and an almost perfect immunity from the criminal class; the consequence being that reformation may be attempted with strong hope of success. In my experience, it has too frequently occurred that by the mode of punishment hitherto adopted persons of naturally good propensities have been crystallized into criminals through the long and compulsory association with those who have lost all sense of shame. It is very often given as a cause of a young person's first fall that he or she got into bad company; and under the old system we say, "You have made a mistake through the unsatisfactory character of your associates: we will reform you by compelling you to