

20. The prisoners at the four centres have been principally employed at fortification-work during the year, and the Defence Engineer reports favourably as to the quantity and quality of the labour performed. At Auckland, the building of the new prison is being pushed on, and makes satisfactory progress. The wings now completed accommodate 45 prisoners. This has entirely done away with the overcrowding which formerly took place in an old vermin-infested and obsolete wooden prison. The grounds at Government House and the Admiralty House at Auckland have been entirely kept up with prison-labour, while extensive repairs and improvements have been made with the same labour at the Mount Eden Rifle-range. At Wellington, in addition to the fortification-work, the new police-station at Mount Cook has been brought to completion, and good work has been done in sanitary improvements at the Permanent Militia barracks, while the usual manufacture of bricks, drain-pipes, &c., has continued. The Mount Cook prison is at a standstill owing to the plan of the drainage not yet being settled. If the lighting and drainage were determined upon and completed the building could be opened as a prison. At Lyttelton the prisoners have done really good work at Fort Jervois, and also at the immigration barracks at Quail Island, and at Dunedin. Besides the fortification-work good progress has been made in repairing the Maori Kaika Road, which was in a sadly dilapidated state, and the Road Board appeared to have no funds available for this work, which is both useful and well suited for prison-labour.

21. At Nelson the prison was reopened with 25 prisoners especially sent there on the 8th June, 1892, for the purpose of making the Rocks Road leading from the Port to Stoke, under the Corporation officials, and really good work has been done, but owing to being unable to obtain the measurements from the City Engineer the exact results cannot be given. The officials, however, appear quite satisfied with the quality and quantity of the work done; but I have no hesitation in saying that had better tools and plant been supplied more work would have been executed. Public bodies who get the use of prison-labour free appear to grudge every penny expended on tools and appliances, probably imagining that if they do not supply these the department will. This is unfair, and tends to make the public believe that prisoners cannot be made to work. The work in hand at this Rocks Road is very suitable for prisoners, and may be looked upon as a benefit to the colony.

22. At Dunedin, nothing, I regret to say, has yet been done in reference to building a new prison, which I have from year to year in my reports pointed out as being urgently required. It is put forth as an argument against building a new prison on the present site, that the prison should be outside the town, but from this opinion I beg leave to differ. As to whether a large prison should be built on the present site, or a small one, may be worthy of consideration, but I am quite convinced that a prison of some kind, within the town boundary, is absolutely necessary. If the building is erected at any great distance from the town, the expenses are increased to a large extent, first by cost of conveyance of prisoners, provisions, and material to and from the prison; then the difficulty of awaiting trial, prisoners seeing their lawyers; next, additional staff, to say nothing of the loss of time and expense to relatives and friends of prisoners who desire to visit them. In order to meet the demands for remands, awaiting-trial prisoners, sick, default of bail, &c., it appears that there must be a prison of some kind within easy distance of the Courthouse and police-station, and such is to be found in all cities in the world. I can only repeat what has been before reported, that the present prison in Dunedin is unfit for occupation, and it is merely a relic of the dark ages.

23. It will be recollected that I took charge of the prisons of the colony towards the close of 1880. Opinions of would-be experts were shortly afterwards expressed, and from time to time since have been repeated, endeavouring to prove that my ideas of punishment and prevention of crime were not likely to result in improved prison administration, as understood in the present day. A retrospective glance at the following table, comparing the prison statistics of 1881, the first year of my administration, with the past year, will be interesting:—

Year.	Number passed through Prisons.	Daily average in Prison.	Net Cost per Prisoner.	Escapes.	Population.
1881	5,360	726.03	£ s. d. 37 1 1	3	595,007
1892	4,082	521.48	36 4 5	1	692,426

This steady diminution in the number of prisoners, with a corresponding steady increase in population, is of course the result of a variety of causes, and I claim no more than to have contributed to the result so far as earnest endeavours to establish a good system may be supposed to have done so; nor is any claim made for originality in the matter, but it is rather the outcome of experience gained in dealing with prisoners in many of the larger English gaols, modified to suit the circumstances in connection with the colonies; but the significance of these figures as a practical test of the preventive and punitive measures in force in the colony cannot be over-rated. As for the financial success, considering that, with a daily-decreased average of over 200 prisoners, the expenses have been reduced by 16s. 8d. per head, I think I may fairly claim the merit of economical administration on behalf of myself, the gaolers, and their subordinates.

24. In conclusion, it is pointed out that during the past year the visits of inspection to the larger prisons have not been so frequent as in former years, which is in a great measure owing to additional duties which I have had to perform; but, I propose to devote more time to the inspection of prisons in future. In order that a uniform system of discipline and administration may