

real, and I believe the less amendments we put on the statute-books the better, unless they are of real importance.

25. The suggestion made by the Gaoler at Wellington regarding the establishment of an agricultural prison, with a brick-, tile-, and pipe-making branch in connection therewith, is well worthy of consideration, and a proposal to much the same effect was made in my last year's report.

26. A new departure has this year been made by the establishment of a tree-planting prison at Waiotapu, twenty-three miles from Rotorua, on the Galatea and Taupo Roads. The prisoners selected for this work are all serving their first sentences, and none have been convicted of immoral or indecent offences. Of course, the experiment has not yet been sufficiently long established to say how it will work out, but so far the conduct of the prisoners has been exemplary, and the Forest Department, for whom the men are working, report that the prisoners are working quite as well as free men. They are accommodated in huts similar to those used by the railway gangers—four in a hut. There are a total of twenty-five prisoners and four officers. The cost of maintenance will, of course, be considerably higher than in the towns, but if the desired effect of keeping these better class of prisoners away from the habitual criminals, and thereby endeavouring to give them a chance of reforming, is taken advantage of by them, the extra cost will be money well expended.

27. It is painful to have to draw attention to a class of offence which is increasing to an alarming extent all over the colony—viz., rape, indecent assaults, and crimes of immorality. When selecting prisoners for tree-planting I was astonished to find amongst the prisoners serving first sentences no less than thirty-nine out of a total of seventy-nine prisoners were serving sentences for crimes of the above nature, the victims in some cases being infants, while others were near relatives of the criminal. It appears to me that, in order to suppress this class of crime, and probably stamp it out quickly, recourse must be had to the lash. If these ruffians knew that, if pronounced medically fit to receive it, one, two, or three floggings would surely follow the convictions, we should, I think, soon see a diminution in these disgusting offences.

FIRST OFFENDERS' PROBATION ACT.

A reference to Table K shows 112 persons were placed on probation last year, as against 117 in the year 1899. Of these thirty-two have satisfactorily carried out the conditions of their licenses and have been discharged, three were rearrested, and seventy-seven still remain under the supervision of Probation Officers completing their respective terms of probation.

The amount of costs ordered to be paid by the various Courts before whom those offenders were brought was £515 9s. 1d., of which £242 3s. 10d. has been actually paid. The approximate cost of keeping these offenders had they been sent to prison would have amounted to £5,029, which sum, added to the amount of costs, &c., actually paid, gives a saving of £5,271 3s. 10d.

Of the 1,232 persons put on probation since the inception of the Act in October, 1886, 1,021 have been discharged after satisfactorily carrying out the conditions of their licenses, seventy-three have been rearrested and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment, one committed suicide, two died, one was sent to the lunatic asylum, twenty-nine absconded, and 105 still remain fulfilling the terms of their licenses. This is a satisfactory result.

I have, &c.,

A. HUME,

Inspector of Prisons.

EXTRACTS FROM GAOLERS' REPORTS FOR 1900.

AUCKLAND PRISON.

I took charge of the Prison on the 1st day of February, 1900, on transfer from the Prison at Napier.

The rations supplied by the contractors during the year have been of a good quality, and there has been an almost entire absence of the usual trivial complaints by prisoners about the cooking and character of their food.

The health of the prisoners has been excellent, there having been no cases of infectious or serious disease. There were two deaths only during the twelve months; both the deceased men were old, and one of them was practically dying when admitted on remand. In each case the Coroner's jury returned verdicts of "Death from natural causes." Considering the number of prisoners dealt with in the year (1,126), and the low condition of health in which many of them were when received, arising from excessive drinking and dissipation of all kinds, it is extraordinary that there were not many more deaths amongst them; but, as a matter of fact, nearly all the prisoners improve rapidly after admission, many gaining as much as a pound per diem in weight for a considerable time. This fact I attribute to the regular hours, cleanliness, good wholesome food, and long nights' rest. I can safely say that, with the exception of slight accidents on the works, no prisoner became ill while in prison. Several were admitted in bad health, and one or two suffering from incurable diseases remained ill during the whole of their sentences. If it had not been for these cases sickness would have been practically nil. The daily average on the sick-list was 1·80.

The conduct of the prisoners has been, on the whole, very satisfactory, very many of them showing great interest and intelligence in their work. There were thirty-six punishments for the year, as against 103 in 1899; but, as several prisoners were punished more than once, the actual number was twenty-three individuals for the year out of a total of 1,126 who were in prison during that period.