

the Gaol Surgeon visits almost daily. When it is considered that many of these persons visiting have very free intercourse with the prisoners, and that they (the prisoners) could tell to them without let or hindrance any grievance on their mind or seeming wrongdoing within the Prison, and do not take advantage of such opportunity, it may reasonably be expected that nothing seriously wrong is going on within the walls.

I can only restate my report of last year as regards the satisfactory conduct of the officers of the Prison. However, it became necessary to call upon one warder to resign his position. Subsequent events as to his mental and physical condition throw a clearer light upon his actions now; but yet it was quite necessary, in the interest of the service, that he should cease to remain in it. It would really be to great advantage to the service if some of the elder warders were permitted to retire, and doubtless several would do so, of advantage to themselves and the Government, if they were assured as to the terms of their compensation on retiring. The Police Force Provident Fund has now been in existence sufficient time to ascertain whether it is beneficial or otherwise, and, if beneficial, why one department of the service should receive a benefit and another and kindred department of like import be excluded is an enigma.

I have pleasure in noting that at last some recognition has been made of warders' services by the issuing of a medal bearing the warder's name and engraved thereon "For long and efficient service." I have no doubt that by-and-by this recognition might act as a stimulus to a zealous performance of duty; but at present, at this Prison, the withholding of the medal for a retrospective offence of a minor nature in no way affecting their length or their efficiency of service seems inclined to act prejudicially as regards discipline, and I trust the Government will not deem it necessary to long withhold the medal from the warders concerned.

If it was considered necessary to note the efficiency of the Gaoler (and his retention in such an office might reasonably be considered a recognition of his efficiency), then might I respectfully say, regarding the medal or mark of recognition in his case, it might have been deemed desirable to present him with a token otherwise than that issued to the subordinate officers, thereby placing all on the same level, which does not tend to act beneficially in the interest of discipline?

However, any work of recognition of the services of prison officers is such a rarity that it cannot be otherwise than satisfactory to the staff to note that at last in some way or other their services are beginning to be appreciated.

First Offenders' Probation Act.

This Act is working fairly satisfactorily, especially so considering the difficulties surrounding the working of it by the many loopholes afforded the probationer by which to evade the conditional clauses. An amendment to the Act is really necessary, but not by such an amended Act as that of 1898, which if purposely framed to hamper the Probationer Officer could not have been more effective.

However, it is satisfactory when some good is done, and the Probation Act is a good Act as it is, but it might be much better with advantage to the probationer, the Probation Officer, and thereby the Government.

On the 1st January, 1901, there were three prisoners on probation, since which time ten were received and eight discharged, leaving five probationers on the 31st December of the same year.

These duties when not perfunctorily performed demand a large quantity of time and attention, no less than seventy-two letters of inquiry and report being necessary during the past year.

I am, &c.,

SAMUEL CHARLES PHILLIPS,
Gaoler and Probation Officer.

The Inspector of Prisons, Wellington.

HOKITIKA PRISON.

SIR,—

H.M. Prison, Hokitika, 21st January, 1902.

I have the honour to submit my report on this Prison, accompanied by the usual annual returns, for the year ending the 31st December, 1901.

At the commencement of the year there were in custody 14 males and 1 female.

The total number of prisoners received was 43—viz., 39 males and 4 females—of whom 7 males and 2 females were "for trial," and were subsequently tried and convicted at the Supreme Court here and the District Court, Greymouth, and eight on remand. Of this latter number 6 were acquitted or discharged, the remaining 2 being convicted and sentenced.

There were no debtors or lunatics committed. Recommitments were 4 in number, all males.

Discharges numbered 42 males and 4 females, leaving in custody at the end of the year 11 males and 1 female.

The daily average number of prisoners in custody during the year was—Males, 12.38; females, 1.27; and of both sexes 13.65, the gross daily cost of each prisoner being 3s. 7½d., a slight decrease on the previous year, and the net daily cost 3s. 4d., the gross and net annual cost per prisoner being respectively £64 4s. 3d. and £66 1s. 1d.

The health of prisoners has been good, save in one instance—viz., that of a man subject to asthmatic attacks, who during the twelve months was on the sick-list some seventy-five days.

With one or two exceptions, the conduct and industry of prisoners has been good.

There were three minor prison offences recorded against one prisoner, a term of bread and water being the punishment awarded therefor by the Visiting Justice investigating the charges.

I regret having to record the escape from custody of two male prisoners during the year, the particulars of which were fully reported to you at the time.