

that he is fit for the prison service. However, they are young men who have joined, and if their heart is in their work all may be well, but it needs a lot of tact to deal firmly with prisoners, and yet to run the work smoothly.

Medals for long service and efficiency have been issued to three of the male staff during the year.

The First Offenders' Probation Act.

Serving on probation, 31st December, 1901	...	...	...	...	5
Received on transfer	...	...	...	...	2
Committed during the year	...	...	...	...	6
Total	...	...	...	...	13
Transferred to other districts	...	...	...	...	3
Absconded	...	...	...	...	1
Discharged—sentence expired	...	...	...	...	5
					9
Remainder on probation	...	...	...	...	4

The benefits of this Act are not granted as freely as formerly, and very few persons here are now placed on probation. The tendency of the Amendment Act of 1898 is not beneficial. No person in this district has been placed on probation since August, 1902.

One probationer absconded during the year—being a seafaring man a situation as mate was obtained for him, and matters appeared to go smoothly, but the night prior to the vessel sailing it was reported that he had deserted from the ship. He had £4 to pay, and an endeavour was made by him to obtain an advance from his employer to settle the same, but as he did not succeed, evidently fearing he would be prevented from leaving New Zealand till the amount owing was paid, he secreted himself on board till the vessel was clear, and thus escaped to New South Wales.

In all cases in which this Act has been in operation in my district every endeavour has been made to work it in the interests of the probationer concerned, and I am pleased to say generally with a satisfactory result.

S. C. PHILLIPS,
Gaoler and Probation Officer.

HOKITIKA PRISON.

ELEVEN males and 1 female were in custody at the beginning of the year. The total number of all classes received was 60 males and 6 females, making a total of 71 males and 7 females dealt with. Of these numbers 50 and 5 of the respective sexes were discharged, leaving 21 males and 2 females in custody at the end of the year.

The daily average was—males 15·96, females 0·96, and of both sexes 1692.

Recommittals were 8 in number, 2 being females.

The health of the prisoners generally was good; 2 men, one suffering from rheumatism, the other from asthma, were several times sick and incapacitated from work, and were mainly responsible for the daily average number on sick-list being 0·21.

The contractors for rations and other supplies gave every satisfaction; the goods received were of excellent quality; on this score there were no complaints from prisoners. For breaches of the prison Regulations, all minor offences, 8 prisoners were brought before the Visiting Justice and dealt with as follows: 1 admonished, 1 sentenced to a short period on punishment diet, a second was similarly treated, with an additional forfeiture of marks, and in the case of the remaining 5 sentence was deferred pending future good conduct.

Four prisoners, I regret to say, escaped from the works on the 3rd November. On the second day thereafter one was rearrested, and on the following day, the other three were taken into custody. Each was sentenced to a further term of imprisonment at the District Courts.

Prisoners were employed much as in the preceding year. At the Westland Hospital, Cass Square, the Supreme and Magistrate's Courts, and Customhouse, the grounds were kept in order; the rifle range was cleared of a thick growth of gorse, improvements were made to the markers' butts, a flagstaff erected, and the fences put in order. A further length of the shallow Rush Road was formed and metalled. The Prison and quarters were kept in a supply of firewood, cut and brought in from the Reserve.

I may here state that the supply of firewood on the reserve is well-nigh exhausted, and arrangements for procuring it elsewhere will have to be made in the near future. I propose to make inquiries *re* this matter, and will report in due course the result thereof. Work performed in the Prison garden was considerable: the potatoes and vegetables supplied as rations to prisoners during nearly ten months were grown therein, and a moderate saving effected thereby. At the Prison a considerable portion of the northern boundary-wall was taken down and re-erected with new material. On the eastern side the wall was heightened some 5 ft. in two places where party-walls intersect. New platforms for water-tanks were made, and repairs generally attended to. The old fence round the Matron's quarters was replaced with a new one, and a large shed erected for the storage of root-crops, straw for bedding, &c. Prisoners with few exceptions have worked fairly well, a drone or two with working-parties being nearly always in evidence.

One warder was transferred elsewhere, as also was one probationary warder on completing his six months' service and passing his examination. Three officers were received from other prisons on transfer; they are still on the strength of this staff; but a fourth one is much needed, especially when the number and class of prisoners undergoing sentences here is taken into consideration.