

GAOLERS' REPORTS FOR 1908.

AUCKLAND PRISON.

H.M. Prison, Auckland, 15th January, 1909.

I HAVE the honour to submit the following report upon the working of this institution for the past year ended 31st December, 1908:—

There were in confinement at the commencement of the year under review 195 males and 30 females. 1,096 males and 119 females were received; thus a total of 1,440 prisoners was dealt with. The numbers received represent 938 and 87 individual persons, 110 and 22 of the respective sexes having been recommitted from two to five times.

Since "The Habitual Criminals and Offenders Act, 1906," came into force, 13 prisoners, all males, received indeterminate sentences: 1 in 1907, the remainder in 1908; 11 were in confinement here at the end of the year. There was a decrease in receipts of 109 males, 16 females, as compared with the previous year. The sending of habitual drunkards to the inebriate home established by the Salvation Army on Pakatoa Island, in the Hauraki Gulf, instead of committing them to prison, no doubt to some extent accounted therefor; this, too, coupled with the transfer of fifty of the longer-sentenced prisoners to the tree-planting and other prisons, materially affected the daily average, which was 241.71, as against 246.85 in 1907—a decrease of 5.14.

The total number of prisoners discharged was 1,052 males, 125 females, leaving in custody on the last day of the year 239 and 24 of the respective sexes. It is much to be regretted that five boys under the age of fifteen years were committed during the year: one was admitted to probation for two years; three received sentences of two years, six months, and three months respectively for their offences, and were transferred to the Burnham Industrial School shortly after conviction; the fifth was a Maori from Whakatane—he was a well-grown lad, performed a man's work, and was returned to his home at the termination of his three months' sentence for theft.

Of those who gave their ages from sixteen to nineteen years, 75, including 4 females, were dealt with, an increase of 3 and 16 over the years 1906 and 1907.

Debtors numbered 13; lunatics, 11; and those committed for medical treatment, 78, inclusive of 8 females.

There were two deaths. The first was a male suffering from delirium tremens in an acute form; he was transferred to the District Hospital, and died there on the day following his reception. The second was a female hard-labour prisoner, serving a sentence of six months; on the 27th February, in the afternoon, she had a sudden seizure whilst in her cell, and expired in a few minutes, before medical assistance could be procured. A post mortem and inquest was held on the following day, and the jury, in accordance with the medical testimony, brought in a verdict that death had resulted from syncope of the heart.

In addition to the male prisoner referred to above, 11 other males were sent to the District Hospital during the year; at its close there remained one in that institution, the remainder having been returned to the prison either cured of their ailments, or much benefited from the treatment received.

There were some 130 cases of sickness of a trifling nature—colds, headaches, &c.—otherwise the health of prisoners generally was very good. One male prisoner who had been in the Hospital for some thirteen months suffering from cancer had the remainder of his sentence remitted, and died four months subsequently.

Two hard-labour prisoners were removed to the Mental Hospital, both having shown unsoundness of mind.

There was an entire absence of complaints as to either the quantity or quality of the rations issued; the contractors supplying these and various other articles for prison use gave the greatest satisfaction.

It speaks volumes for the good conduct of prisoners when it was found necessary to bring only 14 of their number, inclusive of 2 females, before the Visiting Justices for the commission of minor prison offences; all so dealt with had to submit to secondary punishment for short terms, bread and water diet, and in one instance forfeiture of marks in addition thereto. Some 30 others of both sexes for transgressing—their first offence—were cautioned by myself, with beneficial results.

The industry of prisoners has been good, with a few exceptions. During the first six months of the year 20 prisoners were stationed at Fort Cautley; at fortification work; in July this number was increased to 30, and remains so to the present; they have been principally employed excavating a site for quick-firing guns, magazines, &c., and have done very good work. Visits made by me to that prison averaged one every fortnight. At this prison a lot of work has been done, some of which may be summarised as follows: Altering windows of reception and store rooms in basement of female division; removing partition in same division, and building up doorway, thus closing access to penal wing, males (by this the accommodation for females has been increased by 11 cells, and that for males correspondingly decreased); finishing bridge connecting church with women's wing; building wall and steps, and making approach thereto; making seats, altar-table, chairs, reading-desk, pulpit, and other fixtures for church (as at present arranged there is seating-accommodation for 270 males and 40 females); plastering and painting church, and asphaltting and tarring floor, also those of the divisions and rooms in the administrative portion of the new building; removing No. 1 wooden building to fresh site; excavating for extension, and putting in foundations south and west wings, and building outer walls; concreting superstructure over basement of south wing, and filling in to level of ground-floor west wing; building in portion of wall in lieu of old front gate; repainting interior of prison, furniture, fittings, &c.; new roof to carpenters' shop; removing partitions north and central wings, and erecting one between north and south wings.