

THE HIGH COURT OF THE COOK ISLANDS.

SIR,—

Registrar's Office, Rarotonga, 1st April, 1912.

I have the honour to report on the work of the High Court for the year ending 31st March, 1912.

The number of cases heard by the Court in its criminal jurisdiction was 197. The following are particulars of the cases as compared with the previous year :—

	1911-12.	1910-11.
Adultery and illegal cohabitation	13	15
Drunkenness from and manufacture of bush-beer	56	89
Assault	26	32
Theft	23	45
Trespass	11	19
Wandering animals	12	12
Breach of Customs law, &c.	4	..
Breach of Fruit Regulations	14	37
Breach of Licensing Act	6	3
Manslaughter	2	..
Forgery	1	..
Miscellaneous petty offences	29	54
Totals	197	306

The fifty-six cases of drunkenness from and manufacture of bush-beer involved the appearance of 113 defendants before the Court, as compared with eighty-nine cases and 233 defendants the previous year.

In its civil jurisdiction the Court heard twenty-three cases, of which the following are particulars, as compared with the previous year :—

	1911-12.	1910-11.
Debt	9	12
Divorce	8	15
Breach of contract	2	1
Probate and administration	2	..
Miscellaneous	2	6
Totals	23	34

The fees and fines imposed for the year amounted to £164 1s., of which the following are particulars, as compared with the previous years :—

	1911-12.	1910-11.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Criminal jurisdiction	151 10 6	259 12 0
Civil jurisdiction	12 10 6	21 17 6
Totals	£164 1 0	£281 9 6

The total amount of fees and fines collected for the year and paid into the Treasury to the credit of general revenue was £169 3s. 6d., as compared with £283 14s. the previous year.

During the year eight prisoners who had been sentenced to terms of imprisonment were sent to serve same on outside islands. Six of these prisoners were sent to Manuae Island under the provisions of the Offenders' Punishment Act, 1899, and two prisoners were ordered to join a labour party for Malden Island in accordance with the provisions of the Labourers' Emigration Restriction Act, 1900. A European offender who had been convicted of a crime under the Criminal Code Act, 1893, was, in addition to a term of imprisonment, ordered to leave the Cook Islands. The term of imprisonment was served, and the offender left the Islands.

The punishments inflicted by the Court have been carried out under the supervision of the police, and of the fines inflicted for the year but a small amount remains uncollected, portion of the uncollected amount being payable by instalments. The carrying-out of punishments inflicted by the Court will be more effectually done when new police cells are built for the accommodation of prisoners, the present cells being of little practical use.

The Native police at Rarotonga, numbering eight, under the direction of Sergeant Holmes, have been more assiduous in their work than formerly. Better order is now kept in all the settlements, as is evidenced by the fewer number of cases brought before the Court. In Avarua especially, where there is a large attendance at picture-shows and other entertainments four or five evenings each week, the people behave in a quiet and orderly manner, due in a great measure to the efficient way in which Sergeant Holmes and his Native police discharge their duties.

The Resident Commissioner, Rarotonga.

I have, &c.,

E. BLAINE, Registrar.