

Two prisoners escaped and 1 attempted to escape during the year; 2 were recaptured by prison officers, and 1 by the police. In each case a sentence of twelve months' additional imprisonment was ordered. Owing to the locality of the principal works and the youthfulness of the majority of prisoners located here, it may be expected that escapes and attempted escapes will at times occur, no matter how vigilant the staff may be.

The new prison is proving very suitable for its purpose, and is a distinct advance on the old institution, but much yet remains to be done. From long experience and personal observation I feel certain that no scheme of prison reform can be properly administered unless suitable buildings are provided. Proper classification must be made before any really good work can be done, and in order to do this the means for entirely separating the various classes of prisoners must be available. When the new wing at present in course of construction is completed it will be possible to give effect to a proper classification scheme with every prospect of success.

The various works in connection with prison-extension are progressing favourably. The new church, schoolroom, workshop, dynamo-house, and the storage-battery room have been completed. Electric light has been installed throughout the building. The additions to the south wing have received the second story, and should be ready for occupation next year. This will provide accommodation for 40 additional prisoners and for 7 single officers, and also a prison hospital with dispensary and isolation ward. The whole of the additions are being erected in hollow concrete blocks, and the manufacture of the blocks and the building of the wing is being carried out by prison labour. The additional accommodation is urgently required, and should be pushed on with all speed. The material for two additional married officers' cottages are on the ground, and I hope to have both finished in a few months' time.

The concrete-block industry continues to prosper. This form of building is steadily growing in favour. In my opinion concrete blocks as a building-material cannot be surpassed, and are much superior to bricks. They would be most suitable for the purpose of building railway-stations, drill-halls, schools, or other Government buildings, and, besides providing work for a large number of prisoners, would enable the Government to build with concrete at a less cost than timber.

The market-garden industry is still carried on with profit, but owing to the large amount of other work in hand at present it is not being developed to its full extent.

The work of reclaiming 2,450 acres of the Estuary flats is progressing very satisfactorily, and I hope to have the work completed within the time agreed upon. It is a large undertaking, involving the using of a considerable amount of machinery. The only difficulty experienced is that we have not accommodation for a sufficient number of men to carry on the work properly. When the new wing is completed this difficulty will be overcome. A bridge 19 chains in length has been built across the river to give access to the prison-area now being reclaimed. An embankment 14 chains in length has been built, making an approach to the bridge, and a tramway has been laid for the whole distance of 33 chains, thus connecting the prison with the site.

I am pleased to say that the system introduced over two years ago, by way of experiment, of transferring youths to this prison still continues. Practically all the prisoners confined in this prison are first offenders and under thirty years of age. Many of them require both a mental and a physical training. This training is being given, and the results are distinctly encouraging. In this connection evening classes were established over two years ago, and are still carried on. The average attendance at school numbers 30. The usual standards are observed, and every prisoner under twenty-five years of age is obliged to attend until he can pass the Fourth Standard. After this his attendance becomes optional, but all such youths are encouraged to take up some special line of study. In some cases a study of electrical engineering has been carried on through the International Correspondence schools. Other studies are also followed through the medium of text-books. School is held on three evenings per week, the hours from 6 p.m. till 7.30 p.m. being devoted to lessons, and from 7.30 p.m. till 8 p.m. to physical drill.

Divine service continues to be held every Sunday. The ministers of the various denominations attend in turn, assisted by Mr. McLean, City Missionary. The Roman Catholic prisoners have services once a month, and a weekly evening class for religious instruction presided over by the Rev. Dean Burke and Father Kavanagh.

THE FIRST OFFENDERS' PROBATION ACT.

During the year 9 males were placed on probation, and 1 received on transfer from another district; 4 completed their terms of probation satisfactorily and were discharged, and the remaining 6 continue to carry out satisfactorily the conditions of their release.

I have, &c.,

M. HAWKINS,

Gaoler and Probation Officer.

The Under-Secretary for Justice, Wellington.

LYTTELTON PRISON.

SIR,—

H.M. Prison, Lyttelton, 13th January, 1912.

I have the honour to submit the following report on the working of this prison, and to forward statistics for year ended 31st December, 1911.

At the beginning of the year there were 125 male and 20 female prisoners in custody, 11 males being habitual criminals; 569 males and 70 females were received, of whom 6 males were declared habitual criminals and 28 ordered to be detained for reformatory treatment. Of the females