

The demand for this class of building-material is increasing yearly. Great difficulty has been experienced in obtaining the sand and shingle required, on several occasions work having to cease owing to lack of materials. The Department has now arranged for the building of a suitable lighter, thus enabling us to supply our own requirements, which will effect a considerable saving on the cost of production.

During the year considerable progress has been made with the reclamation-works at present being carried out by the Department for the Invercargill Borough Council. This work has been one of considerable difficulty. Now, however, success is assured, and all parties concerned are agreed that, now that the main embankment has been completed, the greatest difficulty has been overcome, and that by the end of 1914 an area of valuable land, amounting to 2,460 acres, should be available. 650 acres of this area will become the property of the Department. The main embankment from Otatara to Invercargill Jetty has been completed, the distance being one mile and a half, and of a width of 44 ft. on top, carrying a road and tramway. The average height of the embankment is 16 ft., and over 300,000 cubic yards of material was used in its construction. A second Priestman dredge was obtained during the year, and no expense is being spared by the Borough Council in order to facilitate the early completion of the work.

The system of transferring youthful prisoners to this prison still continues, nearly the whole of whom are first offenders and under the age of twenty-five. On the completion of the new north wing there should be accommodation at Invercargill for all the youthful first offenders in the Dominion. There cannot be any difference of opinion regarding the wisdom of this course. After thirty years' experience of prison-administration I have no hesitation in stating that the system in force some years back of the indiscriminate herding-together of youthful first offenders with old and hardened criminals was pernicious in the extreme, and no trouble or expense should be spared in the providing of means whereby youthful offenders would be entirely removed from the contaminating influence of old and hardened offenders.

The prison school has had a very successful year, over 40 pupils attending for two hours on three evenings per week. As the result of careful observation I find that our most troublesome class of prisoners are almost invariably those who have little or no education, and it is really surprising to find that a very small percentage of youthful prisoners are, on reception, capable of taking anything in excess of Third Standard requirements, while quite a number have to be placed in the First and Second Standards, and some are quite unable to read or write. Quite a number of youths have been punished during the year for inattention at school, and the wisdom of making attendance at school compulsory has been fully proved. Those most in need of schooling are the most unwilling to be taught. As the work is increasing I would recommend that an assistant teacher be added to the school staff.

The instruction of prisoners in physical drill continues. There are two classes of 30 and 35 prisoners respectively held on two evenings weekly. The Swedish system is taught, and the officer in charge, who is a competent drill-instructor, is certainly to be complimented upon the high state of efficiency to which he has brought his pupils. Those attending are divided into two classes. All begin in No. 2 Class, and promotion to No. 1 depends upon the progress made in No. 2. A spirit of rivalry is thus created. All pupils attending school and drill are dressed in white drill suits, with white canvas shoes, and, in accordance with your instructions, no prison brand appears on the clothing worn at school or drill. This has a distinctly pleasing effect, and is much appreciated by those concerned. The fact of holding the school and drill classes in the evenings is one of considerable importance, for the following reasons: As I have before stated, practically the whole of the inmates of this prison are under the age of twenty-five, and to shut them up in their cells for sixteen hours out of the twenty-four with practically nothing to occupy their minds would not be conducive to their welfare either mentally, morally, or physically. Under the system in force at Invercargill this is entirely avoided. School is held on three evenings per week—Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays; drill classes are held on Thursdays and Saturdays; and classes for religious instruction on Tuesdays. It thus follows that Sunday evening is the only period of rest. This is as it should be—useful, profitable, and interesting employment during the day, and in the evenings opportunity for mental, moral, and physical improvement. The majority of the inmates appreciate and take advantage of those opportunities, but there remains a minority who have a most decided objection to such a course, and those most in need of improvement are the most strenuous objectors; but when it becomes a question of going to school or drill, or undergoing a period of punishment, the very worst of the objectors quickly, in fact invariably, succumb. In connection with this matter I should like to recommend that the system be extended in the direction of providing an entertainment in the form of an address or lecture, with perhaps a number of musical items interspersed—say, once a quarter. Provided the lecturer understood his business and the subject was sufficiently interesting, I have no fear as to the result, especially if it were made a proviso that only those who could show a clean record for the previous month would be permitted to attend. Anything that tends to broaden the mind and quicken the intelligence should be encouraged and carefully cultivated. It is the deadly dull monotony of prison life that tends to blight and kill. The system of permitting prisoners who have passed the Fifth Standard an opportunity of continuing their studies through the medium of the International Correspondence Schools still continues, and it is really surprising the progress that some are making. In each case the cost of tuition has been borne by the prisoners themselves, the amount being, at their request and with the permission of the Department, deducted from their earnings. A number of prisoners have also taken advantage of the provision made whereby a portion of their earnings can be made payable to wives or mothers, and as the amount standing to the credit of each individual prisoner increases the opportunity of assisting those who are dependent on them will be more largely availed of. When a youth voluntarily requests that the larger portion of his earnings