

appointing. A new industry, the making of reinforced-concrete telegraph-poles, has been started here during the past few months.

At Invercargill the main work outside building operations has been, as in previous years, in connection with the carrying-on of the reclamation of the estuary lands. Good progress has been made, the main embankments having now been practically completed and the water shut off. Internal drains, roads, and embankments have now to be proceeded with on lines that have recently been laid down by the Chief Drainage Engineer, Mr. Thompson. A large amount of work yet requires to be done before the scheme is complete, but the undertaking has now advanced sufficiently to render it an assured success. Portions of the area above water-level were sown in grass during the autumn, and the growth that has already taken place gives a clear indication of the fertility of the land and augurs well for the future. The estimated value of the labour expended on the embankments, flood-gates, &c., during the year is £2,630.

From the foregoing it will be seen that a very large amount of useful reproductive work has been carried out by the Prisons Department during the past year, and that with the limited means at our disposal we have utilized the labour of the prisoners to the best possible advantage in assisting in the development of the country.

TREE-PLANTING.

Afforestation-work was carried on satisfactorily at Waipa and Kaingaroa until December last, when, owing to the area reserved for the purpose in the neighbourhood of the first-mentioned camp having been fully planted, the Forestry Department decided to cease operations there and concentrate on the planting of the Kaingaroa Plains. The prisoners at Waipa were therefore transferred to Kaingaroa in the latter part of December, and the camp was finally dismantled and closed so far as the Prisons Department was concerned. Three of the four officers stationed at Waipa had already enlisted, and the remaining officer, who had been declared unfit for active service, was transferred to Kaingaroa.

The amalgamation thus effected will result in economy of staff and in a reduction of the general working-expenses, but, as Waipa had been maintained as a special camp for selected first offenders, the step, although unavoidable under existing conditions, was a retrograde one so far as the classification of prisoners was concerned, and will require rectification so soon as circumstances permit.

The cash credits obtained from the Forestry Department for the work carried out at the two camps during the year was £3,201. Of that amount, £1,972 was earned at Kaingaroa and £1,229 at Waipa.

The progress and labour value of tree-planting operations since the inception of the work sixteen years ago are shown in the table below :—

Area planted by Prison Labour from 1901 to March, 1917.	Number of Trees planted.	Labour Value of Prisoners' Work.
13,106 acres.	36,539,800	£ 57,621

PRISON SCHOOLS.

The evening classes established in the Auckland and Invercargill Prisons have been carried on successfully during the year.

In order that our work in this direction should receive the attention it merited, the school-master in charge of the classes at each institution was asked to furnish a report regarding the effect of education upon the prisoners, the progress of the prisoner students, and the general average of intelligence compared with that of children attending the Board schools.

The statements supplied, which are included in this report under the heading of the respective prisons, throw an interesting light on the general question of the standard of education among those who offend against the law. As pointed out in previous reports, the standard is low, and this is particularly noticeable at Invercargill, where those attending the classes are all young men or boys.

The majority of these youths have been born in New Zealand or have lived in the Dominion for the greater part of their lives, and should, therefore, have had every opportunity of acquiring a satisfactory education. Whether their educational deficiencies have been brought about by low mental development, neglect of parents during school age, or other causes could only be discovered by special investigation; but, from a criminological viewpoint, the natural question to ask is whether it is a case of "cause and effect."

EMPLOYMENT OF PRISON LABOUR.

For the past few years ample employment has been found for the whole of the physically fit prisoners in the New Zealand prisons. Farms have been and are being developed, roads have been constructed, and reclamation and building work carried on. As each year passes, the amount of valuable reproductive work increases, but, as has been pointed out in previous reports, it is essential that a greater amount of industrial work should be provided in substitution for stone-breaking, stone-dressing, and quarrying as a means of employing men who, owing to the nature of their different offences or to their general tendencies, can only be employed "within the walls" or in places where they can be kept under the closest supervision. It is not enough that these men should merely be kept in "safe custody"—they should be kept at work that will develop any intelligence they have, fit them to some extent at least for taking their place in the ranks of labour on their release, and return the cost of their maintenance to the State.